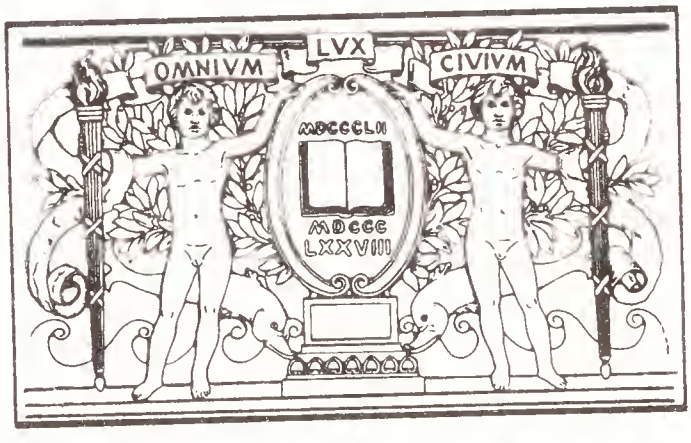
THE POLITICS OF PARTITION

King Abdullah, the Zionists and Palestine 1921 - 1951

AVI SHLAIM

'a magnificent accomplishment'
The English Historical Review



BOSTON
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

THE POLITICS OF PARTITION

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2017 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation

https://archive.org/details/politicsofpartit00avis

THE POLITICS OF PARTITION

King Abdullah, the Zionists and Palestine 1921–1951

AVI SHLAIM

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS
1990

© *Avi Shlaim 1988*

All rights reserved.

First published 1988 as Collusion Across the Jordan.
Abridged edition first published 1990.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Shlaim, Avi.
The politics of partition : King Abdullah, the Zionists, and Palestine, 1921–1951 / Avi Shlaim.
p. cm.
Abridged ed. of: Collusion across the Jordan, 1988.
Includes bibliographical references (p.
1. Israel—Foreign relations—Jordan. 2. Jordan—Foreign relations—Israel. 3. 'Abdallāh, King of Jordan, 1882–1951. 4. Palestine—History—Partition, 1947. I. Shlaim, Avi. Collusion across the Jordan. II. Title.
DS119.8.J67S552 1990
327.569405695—dc20 90-1368
ISBN 0-231-07365-8

Printed in Great Britain

p 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To Gwyn

Acknowledgements

Photographs appearing on the jacket of this book are of David Ben-Gurion and King Abdullah of Jordan. The photograph of Ben-Gurion first appeared in *O Jerusalem* by Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre (Pocket Books, 1972). The photograph of King Abdullah first appeared in *Time* magazine. Every effort has been made to trace the copyright owners of these two photographs, but with no success. If notified, the author would be pleased to make acknowledgement in any future editions.

The author gratefully acknowledges permission to use previously published material in the preparation of maps for this volume, as follows: The base used in compiling map 1 is from a volume published by the Israel State Archives and Central Zionist Archives, *Political and Diplomatic Documents, December 1947–May 1948* (Jerusalem, 1979). Maps 2, 4, and 14 are reproduced with permission from Wm. Roger Louis and Robert W. Stookey (eds.), *The End of the Palestine Mandate* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1986). Map 3 is taken from the Peel Commission report. Map 5 has been redrawn on the basis of Meir Pail's 'The Problem of Arab Sovereignty in Palestine, 1947–1949' (Hebrew), *Zionism* 3 (1973). Maps 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, and 13 are based on maps which originally appeared in Sir John Bagot Glubb's *A Soldier with the Arabs* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1957). Maps 9 and 11 are reproduced with permission from the Israel State Archives' *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, vol. iii, *Armistice Negotiations with the Arab States, December 1948–July 1949* (Jerusalem, 1983).

Preface to the Paperback Edition

Two years exactly have passed since I completed the writing of *Collusion across the Jordan*. This book turned out to be even more controversial than I expected. Numerous reviews of the book have been published, ranging from the laudatory to the vitriolic. I am grateful to all the reviewers whether for their praise or for their criticism. The criticisms were particularly helpful to me when I embarked on the task of preparing the present paperback edition. This paperback edition differs from the original hardback in two major ways: title and length. Both require a word of explanation.

The word 'collusion' figured both in the title of the original book and in the interlocking set of arguments which presented Britain as an accessory to the understanding between King Abdullah and the Zionists about the partition of Palestine at the expense of the Palestinians. Much of the criticism of the book focused on the use of the polemical word 'collusion'. Collusion, according to the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, is a 'secret agreement or understanding for purposes of trickery or fraud; underhand scheming or working with another'. It is clearly a loaded and pejorative term. Abdullah and the Zionists, so the argument runs, behaved as any realistic statesman would have done in seeking to avert a clash through peaceful adjustment and mutual recognition of each other's essential interests. Far from collusion, this recognition of mutual interests, it is claimed, is the very essence of diplomacy. Nor is there anything unusual or immoral in the resort to secret diplomacy since a great deal of what transpires between actors in international politics has, by its very nature, to be kept secret. Such is the game of nations.

I accept the validity of some of these points but it is worth pointing out that when I used the term 'collusion' I did not mean to imply a precise and definitive political and military agreement of the kind reached between Britain, France, and Israel in 1956, but a more long-term process of dialogue and co-ordination

leading to a course of action that is not entirely above board. Although I would not go so far as to describe this co-ordination as immoral or fraudulent, it did involve at least some of the elements associated with collusion: it was held behind a thick veil of secrecy; its existence was hotly denied by the participants; it was directed against a third party; it involved more than a modicum of underhand scheming and plotting; and it was consciously and deliberately intended to frustrate the will of the international community, as expressed through the United Nations General Assembly, in favour of creating an independent Arab state in part of Palestine.

In the book I avoided terminological quibbles and preferred to concentrate on an analysis of the many fascinating paradoxes and contradictions of the Hashemite–Zionist connection against the background of events in Palestine and elsewhere. Occasionally I may have pressed my argument a little too far. The collusion of the book's title is watered down for the period May to September 1948, where I tended to speak of an 'adversary partnership' and 'tacit understanding'. Nevertheless, it still seems to me that the analysis of the diplomatic and military moves of Jordan and Israel during the war bears out my general argument that the two sides acted with deliberate restraint and with the common aim of aborting the birth of the Palestinian Arab state envisaged in the UN partition resolution of 29 November 1947. It also seems to me that the word collusion is not too strong to describe the role played by Britain during the twilight of British rule in Palestine.

So why have I dropped the word collusion from the title? The reason for this is that the relationship between King Abdullah and the emergent State of Israel is so complex, many-sided, and fluctuating that no single adjective can do it justice. My use of the word collusion in the title was unfortunate because it focused attention on the more conspiratorial side of the Abdullah–Israel nexus at the expense of other and no less significant facets. I can only hope that my adoption of a more neutral title for the paperback edition will go some way towards expiating my original sin.

The other obvious way in which the present edition differs from the original hardback is that it is less than half the length. In the

process of reducing the book to manageable proportions, I have also aimed to give it a clearer central theme by focusing more sharply on the bilateral relationship between Abdullah and the Zionists and by not straying more than is necessary into adjacent fields. The largest cuts have been made in the following areas: Britain's role in Palestine and her relationship with King Abdullah; the inter-Arab background to events in Palestine; the military side of the 1948 war; the involvement of the United Nations as a mediator in the Palestine conflict; and some of the lower-level contacts between Jordan and Israel.

The present book is not just a drastically abridged edition of *Collusion across the Jordan*; it is also an extensively revised one. Apart from deleting some parts of the narrative and condensing others, I have rewritten substantial sections of the book and revised some of my earlier judgements and assertions in the light of subsequent reflection and dialogue with other scholars. On some episodes I now put a slightly different gloss, on some issues I have had second thoughts, and on others I have frankly changed my mind. The Conclusion has been written afresh. What has not changed is my conviction that the historian's fundamental task is not to record but to evaluate.

The present edition was written primarily with the student and the general reader in mind and consequently much of the supporting scholarly apparatus has been dismantled. Gone are all the footnotes, all the appendices, and some of the maps. The long bibliography listing all the sources used and all the works cited in *Collusion across the Jordan* has been replaced with 'Suggestions for Further Reading'. Anyone wishing to check the evidence or the sources on which this book is based is therefore best advised to consult the original hardback edition.

A.S.

Oxford
September 1989

Preface

This book is the result of a decade of grappling with the complexities of the Arab–Israeli conflict. In 1980 I embarked on a study of domestic politics and the management of national security in Israel. But several years of burrowing in British, American, and Israeli archives dampened my enthusiasm for 'scientific' explanations of Israel's foreign policy and re-directed my attention to the historical roots of the Arab–Israeli conflict. Accordingly, I planned a historical study of Israel and the Arab world in the period 1948 to 1956, from the Palestine War to the Suez War. But this again proved too vast a subject to treat adequately in one volume, so I decided to concentrate on Israeli–Jordanian relations up to King Abdullah's assassination in July 1951. My intention was to write an extended essay of about a hundred pages. The present volume is the actual outcome. It briefly traces the emergence and development of the special relationship between the amir of Transjordan and the Zionist movement but focuses mainly on the late 1940s when Palestine was partitioned and the State of Israel was created.

A detailed study of Hashemite–Zionist relations during this critical period became possible following the release of the official documents for research in British, American, and Israeli archives. This is an extremely valuable addition to the massive secondary literature available on the Arab–Israeli conflict in general as well as the diaries, private papers, and published memoirs of individuals who participated in the dramatic events of this period. Israel, which has adopted the British thirty-year rule for the declassification of official documents, offers the richest new sources. The Central Zionist Archives are immensely useful on the contacts with Abdullah in the period prior to independence, and the relevant Foreign Ministry papers and reports on most of the post-independence meetings with Abdullah and his emissaries are available in the Israel State Archives. Ben-Gurion's diary is likewise now accessible in the Ben-Gurion Archive in Sde Boker,

while the Labour Party Archive in Kfar Saba contains protocols of relevant debates on Israel's Arab policy. Considerable use is also made in this study of interviews with Israeli politicians, officials, soldiers and intelligence operators who were involved in one way or another in the conduct of relations with Jordan. Details, little-known facts, insights, and reflections were culled from all these sources, but it was undoubtedly the State Archives that provided the most crucial documentary record for uncovering the clandestine exchanges that took place between the Hashemite and the Zionist sides prior to the 1948 Arab–Israeli war, during the war, in the course of the armistice talks, and during the protracted negotiations that culminated in the initialling of a formal Jordanian–Israeli peace treaty.

The writing of history is a perpetual dialogue between the historian and his sources. It should therefore come as no surprise that new sources lead to new conclusions, especially when these sources are as rich and revealing as those now open to researchers in Israeli archives. My own research has steered me towards a novel and no doubt controversial interpretation of the events surrounding the partition of Palestine. So let it be stated at the outset that this is a revisionist history which differs very sharply, and on many important points, from the pro-Zionist as well as the pro-Arab histories on this subject. I did not set out with the intention of writing a revisionist history. It was the official documents I came across in the various archives that led me to explore the historical roots of the Palestine question, drew my attention to the role of Transjordan, and led me to re-examine some of my own assumptions as well as the claims of previous historians.

It is striking to observe how great is the contrast between accounts of this period written without access to the official documents and an account such as this one, based on documentary evidence. One explanation is that much of the existing literature was written by Zionists and consciously or unconsciously incorporates the numerous legends that have come to surround the end of the Palestine mandate and the birth of the State of Israel. I have not come forward to redress the balance in favour of the Arabs and thus substitute one kind of partisanship for another,

nor do I particularly relish the slaughtering of sacred cows. But the opportunity now exists to submit the claims of all the protagonists in the Palestine dispute to serious historical scrutiny and to discard those notions which, however deeply cherished, cannot stand up to such scrutiny.

At various stages on the long journey that ended with the publication of this book I have received generous support from institutions and individuals which it is my pleasure to acknowledge. My research was initiated with the help of a grant from the Social Science Research Council, now the Economic and Social Research Council. Some of the preparatory work was carried out while I was a Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington DC in 1980–1. A grant from the Ford Foundation enabled me to spend the 1981–2 academic year in Israel gathering primary data. On a subsequent visit, in the summer of 1983, the Harry S. Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem provided both a home and excellent research facilities. To all these bodies I am immensely grateful.

Librarians and archivists in the following institutions facilitated access to a large body of primary and secondary sources: the University of Reading; the Middle East Centre of St Antony's College, Oxford; the Library and Press Library of the Royal Institute of International Affairs; the Public Record Office in London; the Wilson Centre; the Library of Congress; the National Archives in Washington DC; the David Ben-Gurion Archive in Sde Boker; the IDF Archive in Givatayim; the Labour Party Archive in Kfar Saba; the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem; and the Israel State Archives in Jerusalem. I was particularly fortunate to have the guidance and help of Yehoshua Freundlich while working at the State Archives.

A number of Israeli friends were extremely generous in sharing with me their own ideas and research materials, and in helping me to tap various additional sources of information. They include Dov Tsamir (who deserves special thanks for opening so many

doors to the Israeli establishment despite his scepticism about some of my views), Varda Schiffer, Mordechai Bar-On, Yehoshafat Harkabi, Benjamin Geist, Edy Kaufman, Dan Horowitz, Ilan Pappé, Uri Bar-Joseph, and Yoram Nimrod. Many other individuals in Israel and elsewhere gave unselfishly of their time; some are mentioned by name in the Bibliography, in the list of persons interviewed, but I should like to extend my thanks to all of them.

All the writing was done while I was teaching in the Politics Department at the University of Reading—a most congenial environment for both teaching and research. I am grateful to all my former colleagues, and especially to Peter Campbell, Barry Holden, Roy Gregory, and Keith Sainsbury, for all their encouragement and support. Two of my research students at Reading rendered invaluable assistance: Mouayad al-Windawi helped with the Arabic sources and put at my disposal his entire collection of Iraqi and British documents; Anne Deighton read the complete manuscript with great care and made many constructive suggestions. I also wish to record my appreciation to Marjorie McNamara, Pamela Tyler, and Sheila Baxter who typed what must have looked like an interminable manuscript with exemplary patience, skill, and good cheer.

My thanks also go to the staff at the Oxford University Press: to Henry Hardy for his wise editorial direction and co-operation and understanding at all stages; to Nina Curtis for being so helpful in so many different ways; and to Connie Wilsack for the speed and meticulous attention with which she edited the massive typescript.

Finally I wish to thank my daughter Tamar, who was conceived at about the same time as this book and grew up with it, for the lively interest she has shown in the main characters, for her suggestion that we publish the story together as a children's book, and for her delightful company. My wife Gwyn, as always, was the source of many good ideas and gave me continuous encouragement in my scholarly meanderings round the Palestine tragedy. It is to her that this book is warmly dedicated.

All the above institutions and individuals deserve a share of the credit for this book, if any credit is due. For the errors, faults, and shortcomings that remain, I alone am responsible.

A.S.

Oxford
September 1987

Contents

	Maps and Figure	xvii
	Introduction	1
1	A Falcon Trapped in a Canary's Cage	18
2	The Hashemite–Zionist Connection	39
3	A Judgement of Solomon	54
4	Two Kinds of Partition	80
5	Mr Bevin's Little King	107
6	The Tortuous Road to War	135
7	On the Brink	153
8	The Invasion	178
9	The Counter-Offensive	195
10	Lull in the Storm	207
11	War and Politics	227
12	The Friendly Belligerents	244
13	Negotiating the Armistice Agreement	273
14	The Sterile Armistice	317
15	An Exercise in Futility	342
16	The Elusive Peace Treaty	355
17	Annexation and Negotiation	390
18	Violent Finale	405
19	Conclusion	422
	Suggestions for Further Reading	437
	Index	441

Maps and Figure

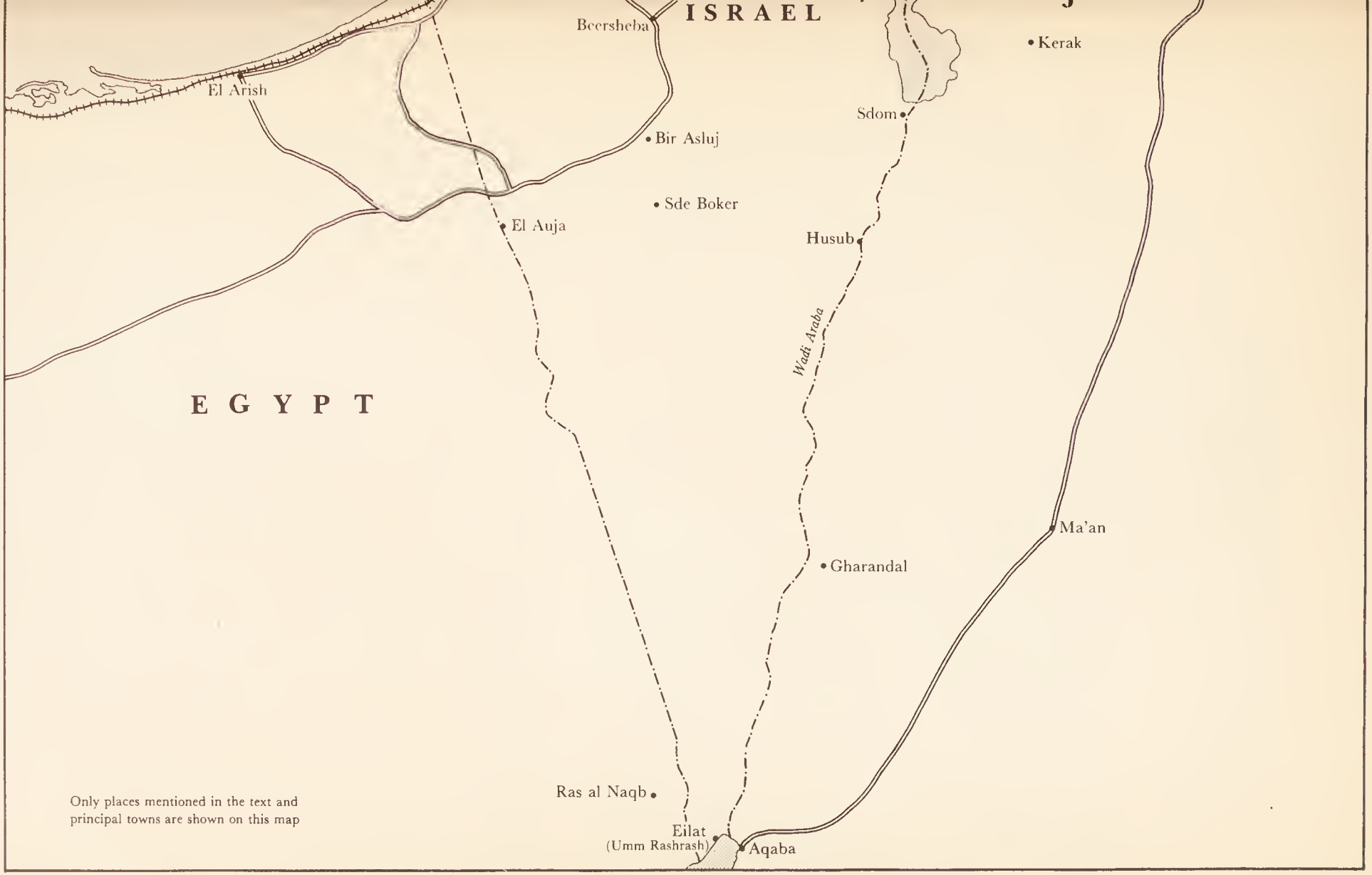
Maps

1	Palestine: general map	xviii
2	The Palestine mandate, 1920–1948	4
3	The Peel Commission partition proposal, 1937	58
4	The United Nations partition plan, 1947	102
5	The 'Damascus plan' compared with the actual invasion	155
6	Entry of the Arab Legion into Jerusalem	183
7	Abortive Israeli offensive against Latrun	186
8	The Israeli offensive against the Egyptian army, 15 October 1948	233
9	Jerusalem cease-fire and armistice lines	255
10	Situation at time of signing Rhodes armistice	277
11	Operation Uvda (*Fait Accompli*) and the Jordanian–Israeli armistice line (south)	287
12	Strip of territory surrendered to Israel, to secure Israeli agreement to an armistice on the Iraqi front	298
13	The Jordanian–Israeli armistice demarcation line	308
14	Palestine following the armistice agreements of 1949	315

Figure

I	The Hashemite dynasty	19

International boundary
Railway
Main road
0 10 20 30 km
0 10 20 miles
LEBANON
SYRIA
Mediterranean Sea
Ras al Naqura
Bennt Jbail
Huleh Valley
Kuneitra
Safed
Acre
GALILEE
Haifa
Sea of Galilee
Tiberias
Degania
River Yarmouk
Atlit
Jezreel Valley
Nazareth
Gesher
Naharayim
Der'a
Mishmar Haemek
Afuleh
Irbid
Wadi Ara
Ara
Umm al-Fahem
Arara
Jenin
Beisan
Hadera
Baqa el Gharbiya
Zeita
Natanya
Tulkarem
Mafraq
Tirat Zvi
Kfar Saba
Kalkilya
Nablus
Tel Aviv
Jaffa
Rosh Ha'ayin
Beit Nahala
Lydda
Salt
Ramle
Ramallah
River Jordan
Deir Yassin
Jericho
Shuneh
Allenby Bridge
Amman
Latrun
Ein Kerem
Isdud
Bah el Wad
Qalya
Beit Safafa
Jerusalem
Wadi Fukin
Bethlehem
Majdal
Kfar Etzion
Dead Sea
Beit Jibrin
Hebron
Gaza



Map 1 Palestine: general map

Introduction

Seeds of Conflict

This book tells the story of the unusual and intricate relations between King Abdullah of Jordan and the emergent State of Israel. Spanning three eventful decades, from the appointment of Abdullah as amir of Transjordan in 1921 to his assassination in 1951, it focuses in particular on the role played by Abdullah in the events that led to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. The general aim is to trace the development of the special relationship between the two sides against the broader background of events in Palestine. The central thesis advanced here is that in 1947 an agreement was reached between King Abdullah and the Jewish Agency to divide Palestine between themselves following the termination of the British mandate and that this agreement laid the foundation for mutual restraint during the first Arab–Israeli war and for continuing collaboration in the aftermath of that war.

The relationship between the Hashemite prince and the Zionists is only one thread in the complex web that makes up the Arab–Israeli conflict but its importance and significance cannot be overestimated. For while the relations between Arabs and Jews in Palestine over the last century have been characterized by conflict, the relations between the Hashemites and the Jews have been characterized by a much higher degree of mutual understanding and even support, by collaboration as well as conflict, by compromise no less than confrontation. The term 'alliance' is too strong to describe this relationship because of its informality and non-committal character, because of the ambiguities pervading it, and because of the limits and constraints that impeded its development. The term 'unholy alliance' is superficially attractive because this relationship did involve ideological deviation from the precepts of pan-Arabism, a breach of the Arab consensus to keep Palestine Arab, and, worst of all, collaboration with

the Zionist enemy. But once again this term would be misleading because it focuses only on one aspect of Hashemite–Zionist relations and ignores the other, describing only collaboration and not conflict. To convey the essence of this unusual relationship, with all its many facets and contradictions, 'adversary partnership' or 'tacit alliance' would be more appropriate. However one chooses to describe the bilateral relationship between the Hashemites of Transjordan and the Zionist movement, it remains one of the most fascinating and vital strands in the generally tragic encounter between Arab and Jewish nationalism.

From the outset Palestine lay at the heart of the Arab–Jewish confrontation. It was both the main prize and the principal battlefield in the unfolding conflict between the two national movements. One of the commonest distortions lies in presenting this conflict as a symmetrical one between two monolithic political groups and failing to allow for the diversity and divisions that make up the Arab side. By focusing on the role of King Abdullah it becomes possible to highlight the opposing interests and divergent attitudes that weakened the Arabs in the struggle against the Jews and played a major part in the eventual loss of Palestine. In short, a detailed historical reconstruction of the dalliance between King Abdullah and the Zionist movement is not just interesting in and of itself; it is also essential for the light it sheds on one of the most complex and protracted international conflicts of modern times.

Unlike most international conflicts, the conflict over Palestine has an easily identifiable starting point: the year 1897. In that year the first World Zionist Congress convened in Basle, Switzerland, on the initiative of Theodor Herzl, the visionary of the Jewish state. The Congress declared as its objective the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine and set up the World Zionist Organization with Herzl as its president to work for the realization of this objective. At the time of the Basle Congress, Palestine was under the control of the Ottoman Turks. It was inhabited by nearly half a million Arabs and some 50,000 Jews. The Arabs, who made up 90 per cent of the population, also owned 99 per cent of the land. But, in keeping with the spirit of the age of

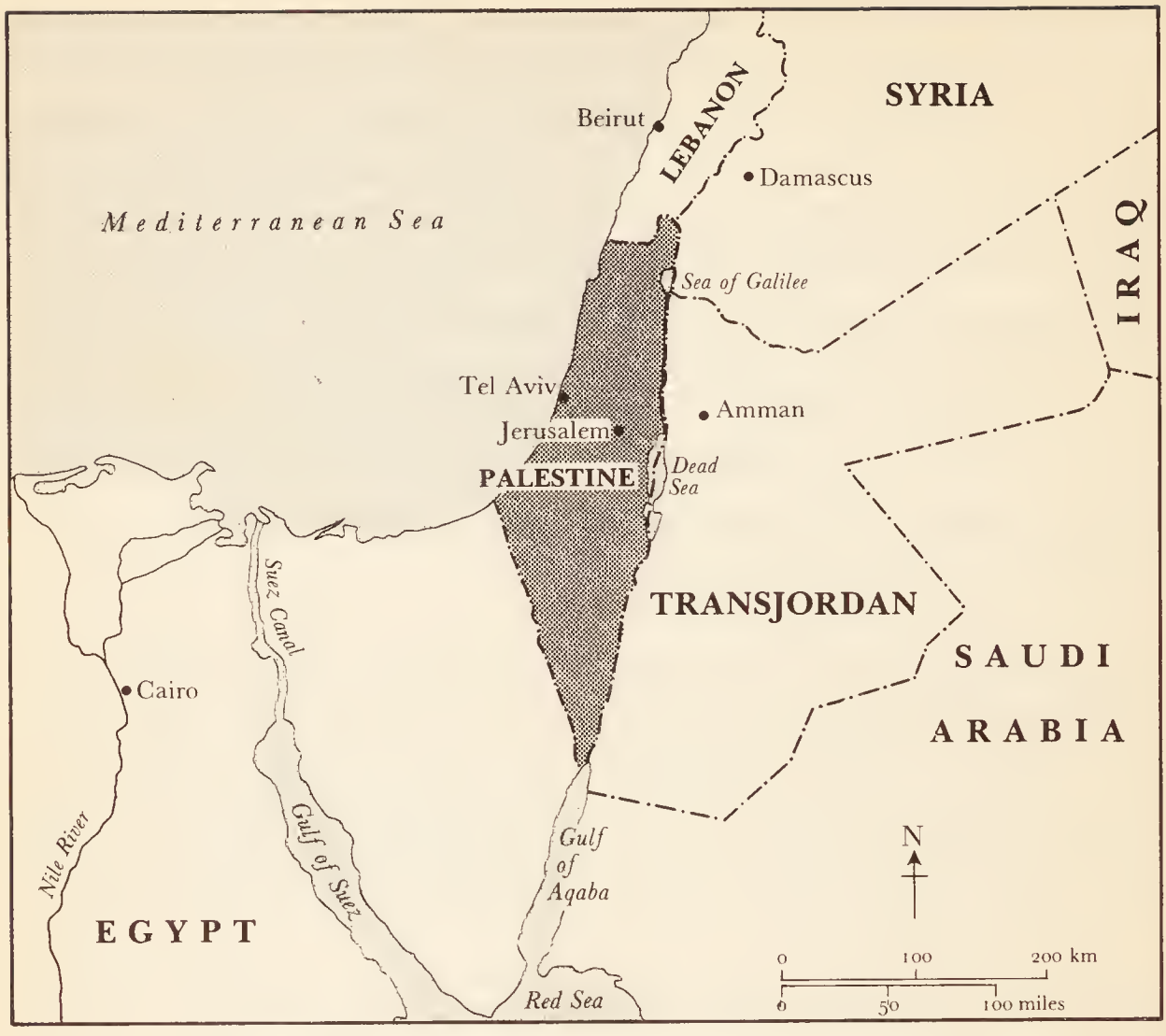
European imperialism, the Jews did not allow these local realities to stand in the way of their own national aspirations.

If the resolution of the World Zionist Congress in 1897 marked the beginning of the Arab–Israeli conflict, the Balfour Declaration of 1917 marks the first major watershed in the development of this conflict. Having encountered opposition from the Arab inhabitants of Palestine and a polite refusal from the Ottoman Turks, the Zionists turned to Britain to sponsor their project for a national home in Palestine. Their most persuasive spokesman in Britain was Dr Chaim Weizmann. His efforts were crowned with success when, on 2 November 1917, Foreign Secretary Arthur J. Balfour issued a statement which said:

> His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by the Jews in any other country.

The declaration was endorsed by Britain's allies at the San Remo conference of April 1920 and incorporated in the terms of the mandate over Palestine conferred upon Britain by the League of Nations (see Map 2). This mandate recognized the 'historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine' and called on Britain to assist in the establishment of a Jewish national home and to prepare the country for self-government while safeguarding the civil and religious rights of all the inhabitants of Palestine. At the time when the Balfour Declaration was issued, the Jewish population of Palestine numbered some 56,000 as against an Arab population of 600,000, or less than 10 per cent. Small wonder, therefore, that the declaration was regarded as a major victory for Zionist diplomacy. Arab nationalists condemned the declaration on the ground that Britain was promising the Jews a land that not only belonged to the Arabs by right but had also been promised to them by Britain herself in her effort to win them over to her side during the First World War.

The Arab case was clear and compelling. Palestine belonged to



Map 2 The Palestine mandate, 1920–1948

the people living in it, and the overwhelming majority were Arab. In language and culture as well as land ownership, the country had been Arab for centuries. Geographical proximity, historical ties, and religious affinity made Palestine an integral part of the Arab world. It was entitled to immediate independence. Jewish immigration and settlement could not take place without the consent of the country's Arab owners, and this consent was emphatically denied. Neither Britain nor the League of Nations had the right to promise a land that was not theirs so their promise was null and void.

The first stirrings of a national awakening among the politically minded urban middle class combined with the Islamic sentiments of the masses to fuel Palestinian Arab opposition to

foreign domination and to Zionist encroachment. Visions of independence and pan-Arab union left no room for a Jewish Palestine. The possibility of coexistence and compromise were denied. If there were moderates among the Palestinian Arab politicians, they were inhibited from giving public expression to their views; they did not command much popular following and they certainly failed to attain the highest positions of power and responsibility within their community. Resistance to the Balfour Declaration and to the Zionist enterprise was a cardinal tenet in the platforms of all the organizations and parties.

The Zionist counter-arguments—that the Jewish people had a right to the land that had been the cradle of the Jewish heritage; that they were entitled to reconstruct their national life on the land of their ancestors after nearly two thousand years of living in exile; that the rights of the Arab majority should be measured not in relation to the Jews already in the country but the whole Jewish people; that the economic development of the country would benefit both peoples; and that no Arab would be expelled as a result of the growth of the Jewish national home—all these claims fell on deaf ears.

The British mandate

With such a wide gulf separating the two local communities in Palestine, the British administration was bound to run into difficulties. Arab resistance to Zionism steadily escalated, with occasional outbursts of violence in 1920, 1921, and 1929, culminating in a full-scale Arab Rebellion in 1936–9. During this period the Yishuv—the Jewish community in Palestine—began to organize itself more effectively behind the protective shield offered by the British, and the fledgling Jewish national home went from strength to strength. The foundations for self-government and self-defence had been laid with the establishment of the Jewish Agency in 1929, and important strides were made in forging political parties, a labour movement, new forms of settlement, a Hebrew education system, a national press, and so on. In the crucial field of numbers, however, the pace of growth fell far

short of the Zionist leaders' expectations of a Jewish majority. From about 56,000 at the time of the Balfour Declaration, the Jewish population increased to an estimated 475,000 at the end of 1939, partly due to natural growth but largely due to immigration from Europe, especially after Hitler's rise to power in Germany. The Arab population during the same period increased from 600,000 to over a million as a result of a higher rate of natural growth. None the less, the Jewish population grew more than eightfold and, as a proportion of the total population, it grew from less than one-tenth to nearly one-half. By the end of 1939 the Jews owned about 5 per cent of the total land area of Palestine and about one-ninth of the cultivable land: over a quarter of a million cultivable acres, or twice the area owned by Jews in 1920.

The political life of the Palestinian Arabs under the mandate revolved round the land-owning and the clerical families. Two families in particular, the Husaynis and the Nashashibis, dominated the scene. The Husaynis gained the upper hand in 1922 with the appointment of the mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin al-Husayni, to the presidency of the Supreme Muslim Council. The Muslim Council, like the Arab Executive set up in 1920, was torn by factional struggles between the nationalist followers of the Husayni clan and the opposition led by the Nashashibi clan. By the mid-1930s several distinct political parties emerged out of the factional splits and mergers. The Palestine Arab Party was dominated by Hajj Amin al-Husayni, though formally headed by his cousin, Jamal al-Husayni. The National Defence Party headed by Ragheb Nashashibi constituted the main opposition. Smaller groups included the *Istiqlal* or Independence Party led by Awni Abd al-Hadi and the Reform Party led by Dr Hussein Khalidi.

The Arab notables boycotted all the representative institutions proposed by the mandatory authorities. The programmes of the parties they formed all advocated the preservation of the Arab character of Palestine, resistance to the establishment of the Jewish national home and the improvement of the social, economic, and political conditions of the Arabs of Palestine. Though highly fragmented as a political community, the Palestine Arabs

were united in their refusal to recognize the legality or authority of the British mandate and by their fear of Zionist intrusion.

Doubting that Jewish immigration flowed from a spontaneous desire to return to the Orient, the Palestine Arabs saw it as a Western bridgehead established under the spurious guise of international legality. They therefore tended to view Britain and the Zionist movement not as distinct enemies but as allies in a conspiracy to deprive them of their national patrimony. Even though the British commitment to a Jewish national home in Palestine did not necessarily imply support for eventual Jewish sovereignty, and even though the Zionists took some trouble to conceal that this was indeed their long-term goal, the Palestine Arabs were in no doubt about the nature and scale of the challenge they were facing. Accordingly, their opposition to the Zionist enterprise was deep, vociferous, and unequivocal.

The Arab Executive served as a forum for co-ordinating policy and disseminating propaganda against the Zionists and the mandatory regime. The Nashashibis were less extreme than their Husayni rivals in the public posture they adopted towards the Zionists and the British. But their moderation had its limits: they were more willing to negotiate over specific issues; they were not willing to sacrifice basic Arab interests. Moreover, although the Nashashibis had a very wide following in the country, Hajj Amîn remained the dominant figure on the Arab Executive as well as becoming the chairman of the Arab Higher Committee formed in April 1936 to represent the six political parties then active in Palestine. But his ascendancy did not continue for much longer. In October 1937 the British authorities dismissed him from his position as the president of the Supreme Muslim Council for his part in inciting the Arab riots and rebellion against British rule.

The Council was disbanded, the Arab Higher Committee was outlawed, and Hajj Amin was banished into exile. Although Hajj Amin's power base was broken, he continued to exert his influence from abroad. In Iraq he was close to Rashid Ali al-Kilani and his circle of pro-Axis army officers, and after the collapse of Rashid Ali's revolt against British rule in 1941, Hajj Amin escaped to Germany where he spent the war collaborating with the Nazis,

working to mobilize Muslim public opinion and recruit Muslim volunteers for the Nazi war effort.

In and out of the country, Hajj Amin had a decisive influence over the direction of the Palestine Arab community in its encounter with the British authorities and their Jewish protégés. Nationalist sentiment and religious fervour blended with his belief in the absolute moral justice of his own cause to produce a rigid and intransigent posture that was in no small part responsible for the disasters that befell the Arabs of Palestine. The view of the conflict between the Palestinian and Jewish national movements that he held and vigorously propagated might in today's jargon be called a zero-sum game, that is to say a game in which every gain by one party is necessarily at the expense of the other party. Historically, the emergence of the Palestinian national movement as a response and a reaction to the advent of Jewish nationalism was conducive to such a view. But it was Hajj Amin who more than any other individual moulded it into an ideology of total and unremitting opposition to Jewish aspirations in Palestine. This ideology, by denying the possibility of compromise or a *modus vivendi*, placed the Palestinian national movement on a collision course with the Jewish national movement and its backers. It was a high-risk strategy that ended in defeat because until the mid-1930s, the British prevented the Palestine Arabs from using their superior power to try and liquidate physically the Jewish national home, and subsequently the Jews became the stronger of the two local parties and were capable of looking after themselves.

If until the outbreak of the Arab Rebellion in 1936 Britain could have reneged on her commitment to the Jewish national home but saw no reason to do so, thereafter she was tempted to retreat but her freedom of choice was considerably reduced. Spurred on by the Hitlerite persecution in Europe, the Zionists stepped up the pace of immigration to Palestine and expanded their capacity for self-defence. A policy reversal would not only have been difficult to justify on moral grounds but would have required as much force to implement as the suppression of the Arab Rebellion. Britain was caught between her commitment to

the Jews and her need to retain Arab goodwill in the struggle against the Axis powers. This dependence enabled the neighbouring Arab states to exert pressure on behalf of the Palestine Arabs. Having displayed a sympathetic and protective attitude to the Jews at the beginning of the mandate, and having gradually shifted towards a more evenhanded position, the British now came under growing pressure to subordinate their Palestine policy to their regional, European, and global strategic needs. Having had to adjudicate between rival moral and legal claims without making much headway, Britain now resorted to political expediency to safeguard her own interests.

The most expedient solution, whatever the moral rights and wrongs, was to partition Palestine into an Arab state, a Jewish state, and a British enclave, and this was the solution proposed by the Peel Commission in 1937. After reaching the conclusion that the mandate was no longer workable, the Peel Commission went on to recommend the partition of the country between the two warring communities. The Zionist leadership accepted the principle of partition and prepared for assiduous bargaining over the details. The Arab leadership, on the other hand, vehemently refused to consider partition and reasserted the Arab claim to the whole of Palestine. In February 1939 Britain convened a round-table conference in London to which Jewish, Palestinian, and Arab representatives were invited to discuss a solution to the Palestine dispute. The Arabs refused to sit down with the Jews and the British had to meet the two groups separately. No agreement was reached, and Britain reverted to rule by decree. A White Paper was issued in May 1939 that came close to reversing the Balfour Declaration by placing limits on Jewish immigration and Jewish land purchase and outlining a plan for an independent state of Palestine with an Arab majority after a transitional period of ten years. It was now the Jews' turn to embark on a course of resistance to British rule.

Jewish resistance to the policy of the White Paper took the form of illegal immigration and land purchases, supplemented towards the end of the Second World War by terrorist actions and physical harassment of British personnel. After the war the

British pursued a two-pronged strategy of cracking down on the Jewish terrorists while seeking a political solution, but after two years of abortive efforts the British government decided to hand over the task of finding a solution to the United Nations.

On 29 November 1947, the United Nations, like the Peel Commission before it, came out in favour of partition, thereby suggesting that the logic of partition had become inescapable. The Zionist leadership accepted both the logic and the plan, but once again the Arab leadership categorically denied the justice of partition and vehemently rejected the United Nations plan. To frustrate partition, the Palestine Arabs resorted to arms and won sufficiently impressive victories in the ensuing civil war as to make the Great Powers consider a retreat from partition in favour of a United Nations trusteeship over Palestine. But while the United Nations was deliberating, the Jews turned the tables on their opponents and gained control of most of the areas allocated to them by the United Nations partition plan. On 15 May 1948, the last day of the British mandate, the Jews proclaimed the establishment of their state, Israel. The armies of the neighbouring Arab states immediately crossed the borders of Palestine in another attempt to nullify the partition of Palestine by force. A clash between the Arab and Jewish communities over Palestine thus turned into a contest between the Arab states and the State of Israel. A new phase in the struggle for Palestine had begun.

Zionism and the Arab question

From the beginning to the end of the British mandate over Palestine, Zionist diplomacy was more subtle and more supple than that of its opponents. Pre-independence Zionist diplomacy was also more resourceful, more imaginative, and in many ways more effective than post-independence Zionist diplomacy. Military capability is the key factor in accounting for this curious difference in performance. In its formative years, the Zionist movement had to compensate for its military impotence by mobilizing all its political and intellectual resources and drawing on the traditional Jewish skills in advocacy and persuasion to attain its goals.

With the massive increase in military power that accompanied the achievement of independence, these skills were no longer at such a high premium. If diplomacy did not yield the desired results, the State of Israel could always fall back on its superior armed forces to protect its basic interests. In short, military weakness stimulated diplomatic perseverance and ingenuity whereas military power tended to downgrade the role of diplomacy as an instrument of statecraft.

The leading diplomat of the Yishuv and the best exponent of its diplomatic tradition of moderation was Moshe Shertok (later Sharett), who was destined to become the first foreign minister of the State of Israel. Born in Russia in 1894, he emigrated to Palestine with his parents in 1906 and lived in an Arab village, becoming fluent in Arabic, building up an impressive knowledge of Arab history, culture, and politics, developing an empathy with the Arabs as a people that was to remain with him for the rest of his life. Sharett studied law in Turkey and served in the Turkish army during the First World War. After a brief spell in Labour Zionist politics as a member of Ahdut Haavodah, Sharett went to study at the London School of Economics where he was also active in the Zionist Federation and fell under the spell of the veteran Zionist leader, Dr Chaim Weizmann. In 1925 Sharett joined the editorial board of *Davar*, the daily newspaper of the Histadrut, a position he held until 1931 when he was appointed secretary of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency. One of his first assignments was to conduct the negotiations with Amir Abdullah on Jewish settlement in Transjordan. After the assassination of Dr Chaim Arlozoroff in 1933, Sharett was appointed head of the Political Department and quickly established himself as a spokesman for the Yishuv in relation to the British and the Arabs with whom he held numerous meetings in search for a peaceful solution to the Palestine problem.

Serving under Sharett in the Arab Section of the Political Department was a group of highly talented Jewish Arabists including Aharon Cohen, Eliahu Elath, Yaacov Shimoni, Reuven Shiloah, and Elias Sasson. Together they built up an apparatus for gathering information: channels of communication and an

astonishingly diversified network of contacts not only with the Arabs of Palestine but with the political leaders of the neighbouring Arab states. These contacts were not confined to ministers, prime ministers, presidents, and the ruling élite but extended to political activists, opposition parties, business interests, the media, and pressure groups.

The outstanding figure among the Jewish Agency's Arab experts was Elias Sasson, originally from Damascus, who was placed by Sharett at the head of the Arab Section in 1937. A polyglot, a skilful diplomat, and a dedicated man of peace, Sasson had a wide circle of Arab friends and acquaintances inside and outside Palestine. In his official capacity as spokesman for the Jewish Agency he was a frequent visitor to Arab capitals where he held hundreds of talks with politicians of every ilk and complexion. Sasson occupies a unique position in the history of Zionist diplomacy as the only Oriental Jew who reached a position of some responsibility and influence; all the others were European Jews. For the story that follows, Sasson is doubly important: he was one of the most articulate exponents of Sharett's general philosophy of moderation towards the Arabs, and one of the chief architects of the Zionist–Hashemite connection.

While the Jewish Agency deserves credit for the resourceful, versatile, and assiduous diplomacy it conducted in search of peaceful coexistence with the Arabs, no amount of tactical flexibility should obscure the fact that the basic aim of the Zionist movement—a Jewish state in Palestine—in itself rendered the conflict with the Palestinian national movement ultimately inescapable. Diplomacy could attenuate the conflict; it could not remove its root cause. Fundamentally, the aspirations of the Jewish and Palestinian national movements were incompatible, and in this sense the conflict between them was inevitable.

No single individual on the Jewish side understood or personified more clearly the truth of this assertion than David Ben-Gurion (formerly Green), the builder of the Yishuv's military power and the founder of the State of Israel. Born in 1886 in Plonsk, then part of Czarist Russia, he arrived in Palestine in

1906, where he spent several years as an agricultural labourer and became active in the Socialist Zionist Poale Zion party, the forerunner of Mapai. From 1910 he served as editor of Poale Zion's organ, *Ahduth* (Unity), signing his first article with his new name Ben-Gurion, which had been the name of one of the last defenders of Jerusalem against the Roman legions. As a law student in Istanbul he advocated an Ottoman orientation for the Yishuv after the revolution of the Young Turks in 1908 but he was then expelled from Turkey at the beginning of the First World War. He spent the war in America, helping to establish *Hehalutz* (The Pioneer) movement, and returned to Palestine in early 1918 as a Jewish Legion volunteer. The idea behind the Jewish Legion was to make a contribution to the British war effort in order to accelerate the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine. Ben-Gurion also advocated the creation of an independent centre of Jewish strength in Palestine which would assist Jewish settlement and serve as the nucleus for 'the state in the making'. This nucleus was the General Federation of Labour in Palestine, the Histadrut, which was founded in 1920 with Ben-Gurion as its secretary-general. In 1935 Ben-Gurion was elected chairman of the Zionist Executive and the Jewish Agency, assuming direct responsibility for the Jewish defence forces in the struggle against the local Arabs and the British administration.

Throughout his political career Ben-Gurion grappled with what Zionists used to call 'the Arab question'. The early Zionists combined profound ignorance with an astonishing lack of curiosity about the social, economic, and demographic realities of the land of their devotions. The presence of half a million Arabs with centuries-old roots and deep attachment to the land was usually ignored, and its implications for the Zionist enterprise were not examined except in the most facile manner. The early Zionists rarely perceived and never conceded that Arab opposition was grounded in principle, that it was only to be expected, and that it amounted to a root and branch rejection of the entire Zionist enterprise. It was more comforting to think that Arab hostility was the manifestation of specific grievances and that it could be overcome by gestures of conciliation, well-timed

compromises, and economic rewards. And it was just as well, for had the Zionists paused to consider the reality facing them, they would have probably lost heart and recoiled from pursuing the Zionist idea to its ultimate fulfilment. What distinguished Ben-Gurion's approach to the Arab problem was deep intellectual insight and unflinching realism even in the face of the most unpalatable facts and the formulation of policies that were based on those facts rather than on pious self-righteousness or wishful thinking.

A wide gulf separated Ben-Gurion's public utterances on the Arab question from his real convictions. There was also a certain development in his thinking on the subject, reflecting the lessons he distilled from practical experience. The romantic phase in his thinking did not last long. As early as 1910 he recognized that a conflict existed between Arab and Jewish aspirations and spoke openly of the hatred felt by the former for the latter. The decade from 1918 to 1929 was the socialist phase in the development of his thinking. During this period he denied the existence of the conflict, spoke of class solidarity between Jewish and Arab workers, and predicted that the coming social revolution would usher in peace and harmony. From 1929 to 1936 he conceded publicly again that the Jews and the Arabs were at cross-purposes but maintained that these differences could be resolved through negotiations. After 1936 Ben-Gurion admitted that the Arab–Jewish conflict was fundamentally political and as such not susceptible to peaceful resolution. Underlying these shifting public positions there were two unchanging convictions: that the support of a world power was more crucial for the Zionist movement than agreement with the Arabs, and that the Arab acceptance of Zionist presence in Palestine would only ensue from an appraisal of Zionist power.

After his rise to the leadership of the Zionist movement, Ben-Gurion concentrated his formidable energies on the acceleration of Jewish immigration to Palestine but, recognizing that his movement faced a strong Arab national movement, he initiated talks with Arab leaders to see if a common platform for the aspirations of the two national movements could be found. His

interlocutors included Musa Alami, the eminent Palestinian moderate, Awni Abd al-Hadi, the leader of the pan-Arab Istiqlal Party in Palestine, Riad al-Sulh, the Lebanese pan-Arab activist, Amin Shakib Arslan and Ihsan al-Jabri, the Syrian nationalist leaders, and George Antonius, the theoretician of pan-Arabism. These talks finally convinced Ben-Gurion that the gulf separating the positions of the two national movements could not be bridged. He knew intuitively that his full-blooded Zionist programme had no chance of being accepted by any Arab nationalist, but its public rejection by Arslan and Jabri as arrogant and fantastic dashed any lingering hope there might have been of reaching agreement on the fundamental issue.

The simple truth was that there were two peoples and one country, and both wanted it for themselves. In May 1936, after his talk with Antonius, Ben-Gurion conceded in public for the first time that the goals of the two peoples could not be reconciled. 'There is a conflict, a great conflict', he told the Jewish Agency directorate. 'We and they want the same thing: we both want Palestine. And that is the fundamental conflict.' While some of his colleagues in the Jewish Agency continued to believe that a compromise solution might be possible, Ben-Gurion grasped that the essential structure of the conflict left no room for compromise and that the eventual settlement was bound to reflect the balance of power between the two parties.

Reluctant to embark overtly on a collision course when the balance of power between Jews and Arabs in Palestine could not guarantee the desired outcome, Ben-Gurion developed a gradualist long-term strategy whose starting point was the acceptance of the principle of partition. A final point, a final goal, a final destination did not exist. In Ben-Gurion's thinking every objective, every goal, was just a stage in the march of history and every goal, once attained, became a staging post for the attainment of the next goal. The partition lines were of secondary importance in Ben-Gurion's eyes because he intended to change them in any case; they were not the end but only the beginning.

The Hashemite connection

The irreconcilable conflict between the Jewish and the Arab national movements in Palestine provided the setting for the emergence of the special relations between the Zionists and Abdullah, the amir of Transjordan. All the efforts made by Zionist representatives to reach an understanding with the leaders of the Arab community in Palestine ended in failure. Frustration in this quest to resolve the conflict between the two communities who were living cheek by jowl in Palestine spurred Zionist leaders to seek a counterweight to local hostility in better relations with the neighbouring Arab countries. Indeed, the attempt to bypass the Palestine Arabs and forge links with the rulers of the Arab states became a central feature of Zionist diplomacy in the 1930s and 1940s.

Transjordan's special significance in this context stemmed from three main factors: the geographic, the political and the personal. In the first place, there was the physical proximity, the long-standing historical links, and the close economic relations between Transjordan and Palestine. The River Jordan did not constitute a frontier or a barrier but an economic bridge between its East Bank and its West Bank. The British mandate over Palestine, initially at least, covered both banks and both fell under the jurisdiction of the British high commissioner for Palestine. Thus, of all the neighbouring Arab countries, Transjordan was the most directly and intimately involved in the affairs of Palestine.

Secondly, the political interests of the Jewish National Home converged in many different ways with those of Abdullah's amirate to create a basic pattern of mutual dependence. The two weak and to some extent anomalous political entities had similar problems, a common protector and a common enemy. Both were the products of the mighty British Empire, both continued to depend on this Empire for protection and support, and both were desperately anxious to ensure that they would outlive what Elizabeth Monroe aptly called 'Britain's moment in the Middle East'. Both had to operate within a hostile environment in their

quest for independence, viability, and expansion. And both had a common enemy in the shape of the mufti for the mufti had not only put his forces on a collision course with the Jews, he was also Abdullah's principal rival for the loyalty of the Palestine Arabs and the control of the Arab areas of Palestine. Palestinian and other Arabs may have regarded Abdullah and the Jews as pariahs, but this only served to reinforce their sense of affinity and mutual dependence.

Thirdly, there was the personal element which played such a crucial role on the Transjordanian side in establishing and sustaining the relationship with the Jewish Agency and later the State of Israel. As an autocratic ruler, Abdullah was relatively free of domestic political constraints in his choice of external allies and adversaries. As a pragmatic statesman he recognized that the Jewish claim in Palestine could not be denied and he also had the courage to translate converging interests into a strategic partnership with the emergent Jewish state. Abdullah may not have fully understood the convictions and the commitment which propelled the Jews to strive so relentlessly for a state of their own in Palestine, but he knew a going concern when he saw one.

1

A Falcon Trapped in a Canary's Cage

The Hashemites and the Arab Revolt

A profound faith that the Hashemites were destined to rule over the entire Arab world inspired Abdullah throughout a long and eventful political career which carried him from his ancestral home in the Hijaz in western Arabia, to become amir of Transjordan and later king of Jordan. Second son of Husayn Ibn Ali, the grand sharif of Mecca, Abdullah belonged to a noble Arab family which traced its descent from the Prophet's daughter Fatima, whose husband Ali was fourth of the caliphs and head of the house of Hashem. It was this ancestry, being thirty-seventh in the line of descent from Muhammad, that made the sharif the guardian of the Holy Places in the Hijaz and fostered his ambition for an independent Arab kingdom and for the caliphate. And it was knowledge of these pretensions that led the suspicious Ottoman rulers to 'invite' Husayn to Constantinople as the guest of the sultan where they could keep him under direct supervision. Husayn took with him to Constantinople his four sons, Ali, Abdullah, Faisal, and Zeid, and it was only after the Young Turks revolution in 1908 that he was allowed to return to the Hijaz and was appointed amir of Mecca.

Of Husayn's four sons, Abdullah was the most astute and politically ambitious. Born in Mecca in 1880, Abdullah received his education, which included military training, in Constantinople and in the Hijaz. Between 1912 and 1914 he was deputy for Mecca in the Ottoman Parliament, where he promoted his father's interests with acumen and enthusiasm. It was during this period that he developed his interest in Arab nationalism and began to link his father's desire for autonomy in the Hijaz to the broader

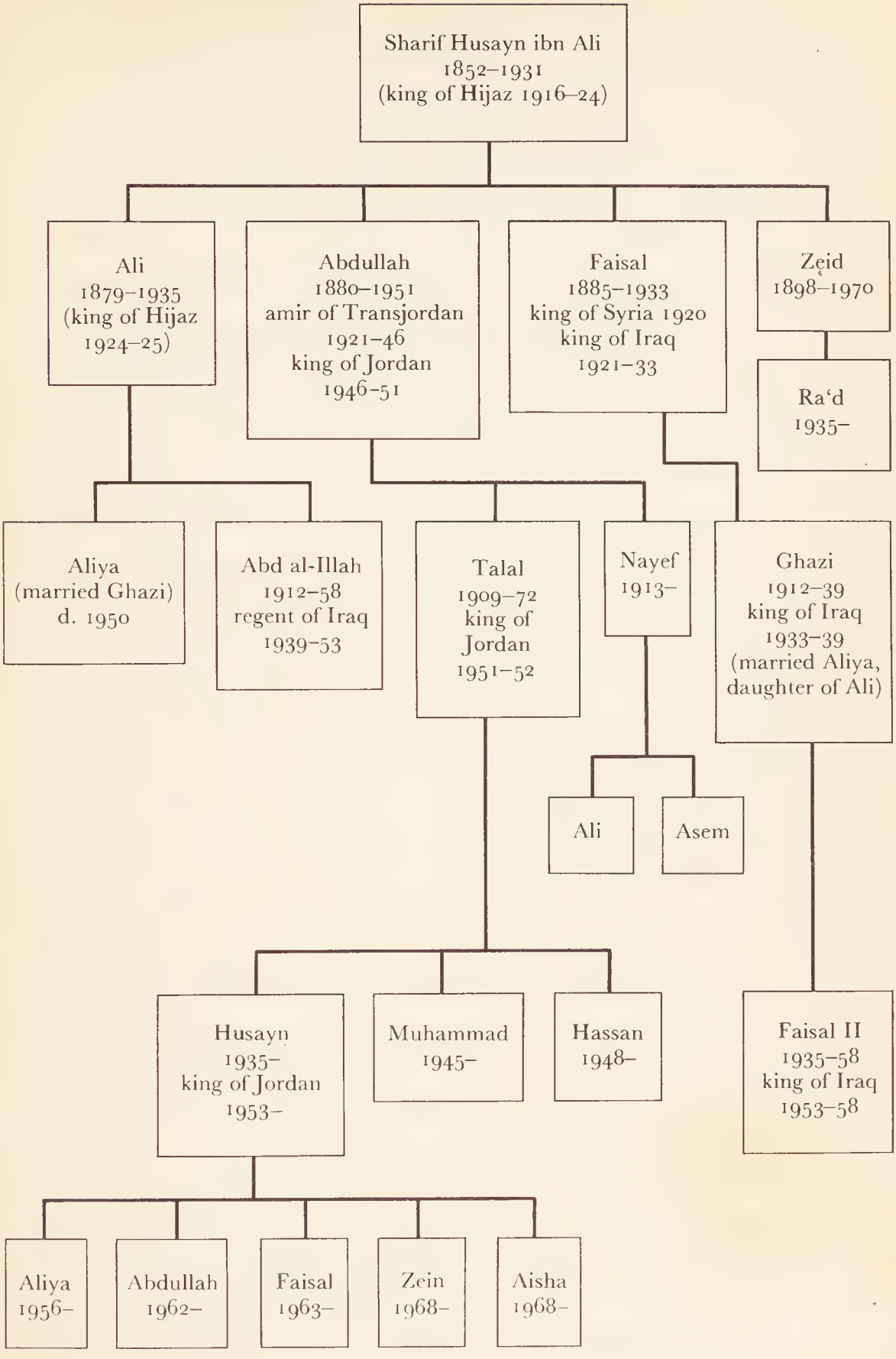


Figure I *The Hashemite dynasty*

and more radical ideas for Arab emancipation from Ottoman rule. In 1914 he returned to Mecca by way of Cairo, where he met Lord Kitchener, the British high commissioner, to explore the possibility of support in the event of an uprising against the Ottomans. Soon after his return home Abdullah became his father's foreign minister, political adviser, and one of the commanders of the Arab Revolt.

Abdullah was the thinker, planner, schemer, and driving force behind the Arab Revolt, though his younger brother Faisal assumed active control of the revolt as commander of the Arab army while the overall leadership was nominally in the hands of their old father. As Faisal himself confided to T. E. Lawrence, his liaison officer and most renowned chronicler of the 'revolt in the desert', the idea of an Arab uprising against the Turks was first conceived by Abdullah. It was only gradually and under constant prodding from Abdullah that the conservative sharif of Mecca raised his sights from the idea of home rule for his corner of Arabia inside the Ottoman Empire to complete independence for all its Arab provinces from Yemen to Syria. Husayn became a separatist only after he had tried and failed to attain his limited political objectives within the framework of the Ottoman Empire, whilst Abdullah became convinced of the necessity to break up the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of 1914. A further difference of an ideological character separated father from son: Husayn's idea of nationalism was based on the conservative concept of tribal and family unity, whereas Abdullah's was based on the theory of Arab pre-eminence among Muslims. Moreover, to have any chance of success in mounting an open rebellion against the mighty Ottoman Empire, the indigent rulers of the Hijaz province had to have the backing of another Great Power, and that Power could only be the British Empire, which had its own designs on Arabia. The guardian of the Holy Places of Mecca could not easily bring himself to embrace a Christian Power in his struggle against fellow Muslims. Divided counsel within his own family circle did nothing to ease his predicament. Faisal emphasized the risks and pleaded for caution; Abdullah wanted to play for high stakes and urged him to raise the standard of the Arab

Revolt. Husayn warily plotted a middle course with the deviousness characteristic of oriental diplomacy: he made secret overtures to the British at the same time as he was seeking a compromise solution with the Turks.

The approach of war made the British much more receptive to Hashemite overtures, and to Abdullah fell the task of weaving the threads of this unholy alliance against the Sublime Porte. At the first meeting between Abdullah and Kitchener, the possibility of co-operation was raised but no commitment was made by either side. At a subsequent meeting with Ronald Storrs, the oriental secretary of the British Residency in Cairo, Abdullah was more forward: he asked whether Great Britain would present the sharif with a dozen, or even a half-dozen machine guns. When asked what could possibly be their purpose, he replied that they would be for defence against attack by the Turks. Storrs made it clear that Great Britain could not entertain the idea of supplying arms to be used against Turkey but he left the door wide open for further explorations.

Between July 1915 and March 1916 a number of letters were exchanged between the sharif of Mecca and the British high commissioner in Cairo which came to be known as the McMahon–Husayn correspondence. In his first note the sharif, speaking in the name of 'the Arab nation', demanded British recognition of Arab independence in the entire Arabian peninsula and the area covered by present day Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, and the northern provinces of Iraq. To this absurdly inflated territorial claim was added a request for a British approval of a proclamation of an Arab caliphate of Islam. The note exhibited the vaulting ambition nursed by Abdullah, who remained the moving spirit and the 'power behind the throne' on the Sharifian side. After a year of desultory negotiation, Sir Henry McMahon conveyed the British government's agreement to recognize Arab independence over an area more limited than that to which Husayn had originally staked a claim, and the sharif undertook to join the Allies by mounting a rebellion against the Ottomans. The correspondence, conducted in Arabic, was shrouded in ambiguity, vagueness, and deliberate obscurity. It reveals a continuous

thread of evasive pledges by Britain and compromises by the sharif, who appears to have been moved by dynastic interests and the wish to extend the power of his family rather than by the cherished dream of the Arabs for independence. His dream was to found an independent Hashemite empire, uniting the whole of the Arab Middle East, on the ruins of the Ottoman Empire. The British, who had their own interests to consider, failed to spell out the difference between his ambition and their commitments. Oriental diplomacy is not usually precise unless compelled to be so, and the methods by which the negotiations were conducted in 1915–16 left a great deal to be desired in this respect. In particular, the correspondence was imprecise as to whether the territory which became Palestine was, or was not included in the area within which Britain was prepared to recognize Arab independence. Conflicting interpretations over this issue were to plague Anglo-Arab relations after the war.

As its origins make all too clear, the Arab Revolt which broke out in June 1916 and is remembered to this day as the Golden Age of Arab nationalism was in essence an Anglo-Hashemite plot. Britain financed the revolt as well as supplying arms, provisions, direct artillery support, and experts in desert warfare, among whom was the legendary and controversial T. E. Lawrence, popularly known as 'Lawrence of Arabia'. The Hashemites promised much more than they were able to deliver and their grandiose plans collapsed in shambles. A disappointingly small number of Syrian and Iraqi nationalists flocked to the Sharifian banner, while in Arabia itself a large number of Arab officers remained loyal to the sultan. The first phase of the revolt was confined to the Hijaz where Mecca, Taif, and Jedda fell in rapid succession to the rebel forces consisting of Hijazi bedouins commanded by the sharif's four sons, Ali, Abdullah, Faisal, and Zeid. Three of these units laid the siege on Medina and were tied down there until the end of the war. Only Faisal's unit was freed to assist the British offensive in Palestine and Syria and was allowed to enter Damascus first and hoist the Arab flag.

The military value of the Arab Revolt is a matter of some dispute. Lawrence, who did more than any other man to glorify

the revolt and advertise its military successes, was rather disparaging about the role played by Abdullah. The picture which emerges from his account is that of a light-hearted and pleasure-seeking prince who wanted the rewards of victory but possessed none of the qualities necessary for successful leadership in war. 'The Arabs thought Abdullah a far-seeing statesman and an astute politician', wrote Lawrence. 'Astute he certainly was, but not greatly enough to convince us always of his sincerity. His ambition was patent. Rumour made him the brain of his father and of the Arab Revolt, but he seemed too easy for that. His object was, of course, the winning of Arab independence and the building up of Arab nations, but he meant to keep the direction of the new states in the family. So he watched us, and played through us to the British gallery.' He might be of some value, thought Lawrence, in the peace that would come after success, but during the physical struggle, 'when singleness of eye and magnetism, devotion and self-sacrifice were needed, Abdullah would be a tool too complex for a simple purpose, though he could not be ignored even now'.

The post-war settlement

Indeed, Abdullah could not be ignored. He and the other princes who headed the revolt became the leading spokesmen for the Arab national cause at the peace conferences which ended the First World War and in the settlement following the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire. For their contribution to the Allied war effort against the Turks, Britain had promised, or half-promised, to support Arab independence. But the territorial limits governing this promise were left so ineptly and obscurely defined in the McMahon–Husayn correspondence that a long and bitter wrangle was bound to ensue between the two sides, especially over the disposition of Palestine. Another major uncertainty surrounded the regime and institutions to be installed in the Arab areas which were indisputably marked for independence. Should this independence take the form of a united kingdom, a federation, or an alliance between independent states? Was Britain

committed only to recognizing Arab independence or also to Hashemite rule over these areas? One searches in vain for answers or even clues to these questions in the McMahon–Husayn correspondence. Husayn himself regarded Arab unity as synonymous with his own kingship and as an empty phrase unless so regarded. Arab unity meant little to him except as a means to personal aggrandizement. He aspired to head a united Arab kingdom consisting of the Arabian peninsula, Greater Syria, and Iraq, with his sons acting as viceroys. Such was the impatience of the Sharifians that within four months of the outbreak of the revolt, the grand sharif, at the instigation of his enterprising second son, was proclaimed king of the Arab nation. At first the British refused to recognize him, and when they eventually did so in January 1917, they recognized him only as king of the Hijaz.

The task of fashioning a new political order in the Middle East following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire was further complicated by other commitments undertaken by the British government after the initiation of its clandestine exchanges with the sharif of Mecca. Under the terms of the Sykes–Picot agreement of May 1916, the whole Fertile Crescent, comprising modern Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine, was divided into British and French spheres of influence. Each sphere was in turn divided into two zones, one to be placed under direct British or French rule and the other turned over to semi-independent Arab states or confederation of states. France and Britain were to supply advisers and enjoy economic privileges in the Arab states which would emerge within their respective spheres. The third and most famous promise made by the British government, in the Balfour Declaration of November 1917, was to support the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.

The peace conference found the Arabs free from Turkish control but ensnared in a more complex diplomatic web spun by rivalries of the Great Powers and the baffling array of pledges they made in their eagerness to inherit the Ottoman Empire. Faisal, who had formed a temporary administration in Syria, attended the Paris peace conference as the envoy of the king of the Hijaz. By temperament inclined to moderation and compromise,

Faisal was enjoined by his authoritarian and crotchety old father to insist on nothing less than complete independence. Faisal possessed more than a touch of the romantic aura, gentle melancholy, physical grace, and perfect manners which many upper-class Englishmen found irresistibly attractive. But he was out of his depth in the world of Great Power diplomacy, and he left the conference empty-handed to face a rapidly deteriorating situation in Syria. Faisal tried to pursue a middle-of-the-road policy regarding the French, the troubles in Iraq, and the Palestinian Arabs' complaints against the Jews. But the clash with the French was made inevitable by the inflexibility of his Syrian nationalist supporters and by their insistence on a completely independent kingdom of Greater Syria, embracing Transjordan and Lebanon. A fervently nationalistic Syrian Congress meeting in Damascus in March 1920 offered Faisal the kingdom of Syria, which he hesitantly accepted, thereby embarrassing the British and antagonizing the French, who refused to recognize him. Brushing aside these Arab nationalist claims, the Supreme Council of the Peace Conference proceeded to San Remo to place Iraq, Transjordan, and Palestine under the mandatory authority of Britain, and Lebanon and Syria under the mandatory authority of France. In July 1920 came the final blow when French forces marched on Damascus, banished Faisal, and took over the government of the country. Thus was created the modern state of Syria, with a republican regime, under French protection, and on the ruins of the dream of a united Arab kingdom led by the Hashemites.

Many significant trends in Middle East politics have their origins in the events which unravelled in Damascus between 1918 and 1920, culminating in the fall of Faisal. The abiding mistrust of the French towards British intentions and policies in this part of the world goes back to these early post-war years. So does the grudge nursed by Syrian nationalists against the Western Powers for broken promises and cynical disregard for Arab rights. The Hashemites for their part constantly harked back to their short-lived kingdom in Damascus and based on it their various plans for Greater Syria. Finally, the fact that the Hashemites allied them-

selves with Britain in order to further their dynastic ambitions accounts for the estrangement and mutual suspicion between themselves and the more radical forces of Arab nationalism.

The foundation of the amirate of Transjordan

The eclipse of Faisal in Damascus gave Abdullah the opportunity to stage a comeback on the Arab stage after he had been soundly beaten on the battlefield by the Wahabi forces of Ibn Saud, denied admission to the peace conference by the Allies, and experienced growing difficulties with his father which led to his resignation as foreign minister. When the Syrian Congress elected Faisal to the throne of Syria in March 1920, a group of Arab leaders had nominated Abdullah to the throne of Iraq. But he received no encouragement from the British to seek that particular throne. Casting about for a principality to make his own, Abdullah turned his attention to the mountainous country lying east of the Jordan which nominally formed part of the British mandate but in practice had been left to its own devices and degenerated into a centre of brigandage and lawlessness. No troops had been left to administer this barren territory and only a handful of British political advisers (including Sir Alec Seath Kirkbride), and there was no intention at that stage of forming it into an independent Arab state.

It was to this territory that Abdullah set off from Medina, with his father's blessing, at the head of a small band of retainers and tribesmen. On arrival in Maan in November 1920 he proclaimed his intention to march on Damascus, drive out the French aggressors, and restore King Faisal to his rightful throne. From Maan Abdullah moved northwards to Kerak where Capt. Alec Kirkbride, having received no instructions on how to deal with this unlikely contingency, decided to welcome the prince in the name of the National Government of Moab. This curious encounter between the Hashemite prince and the polite young Englishman marked the beginning of a warm personal friendship and a close political association severed only by the former's death thirty years later. Finally, in March 1921, Abdullah arrived in Amman

and set up his headquarters, still with the declared intention of raising a larger force to mount an invasion of Syria from the south.

Abdullah's arrival in Transjordan threw into disarray a conference held in Cairo by Winston Churchill, the colonial secretary, to discuss Middle East affairs. Churchill had already promised the throne of Iraq to Faisal as a consolation prize for the loss of Syria. This offer was part of the 'Sharifian policy' favoured by Churchill, a policy of forming a number of small states in Arabia and the Fertile Crescent, all headed by members of the sharif's family and of course under British influence and guidance. This policy was threatened by Abdullah's bold march into Transjordan, and his well-advertised plan of reinstating Faisal in Damascus as a prelude to asserting his own claim to the Iraqi throne. Although such a move would have been doomed to failure from the start, it could embroil the British in difficulties with their suspicious French allies—and besides, Transjordan was needed by them as a link between Palestine and Iraq. The initial impulse of the eminent Arabists assembled in Cairo was to eject the upstart out of Eastern Palestine, by force if necessary, and administer the area directly. But on further reflection it was decided to accept the *fait accompli* and let Abdullah stay in Transjordan as the representative of the British government, on condition that he renounced his claim to Iraq in favour of his brother Faisal, undertook to prevent any hostile acts against the French in Syria, and recognized the British mandate over Transjordan as part of the Palestine mandate. Sir Herbert Samuel, the high commissioner for Palestine, doubted Abdullah's ability to check anti-French and anti-Zionist activities in the area, but Churchill stressed the importance of securing the goodwill of the king of Hijaz and his sons, while Lawrence claimed that Abdullah was better qualified for the task than the other candidates by reason of his position, lineage, and very considerable power, for better or for worse, over the tribesmen. Lawrence was convinced that anti-Zionist sentiment would wane, and that Transjordan could be turned into a safety valve by appointing a ruler on whom Britain could bring pressure to bear to check anti-Zionist agitation. The

ideal, said Lawrence, would be 'a person who was not too powerful, and who was not an inhabitant of Transjordan, but who relied on His Majesty's Government for the retention of his office'. In other words, the British were looking for a stooge.

At a hastily arranged meeting in Jerusalem, Churchill himself, with the eager assistance and encouragement of Lawrence, offered Abdullah the amirate of Transjordan, comprising the territory between the River Jordan and the Arab Desert to the east, on condition that he renounce his avowed intention of conquering Syria and accept the validity of the British mandate. Abdullah, relieved to be quit of a military adventure with an extremely doubtful outcome, accepted the offer with alacrity and probably congratulated himself on his good fortune. In return for Abdullah's undertaking to forswear and prevent any belligerent acts against the French in Syria, Churchill promised to try to persuade the French to restore Arab government there, this time with Abdullah at its head. Abdullah's suggestion that he should be made king of Palestine as well as Transjordan was declined by Churchill on the grounds that it conflicted with British commitment to a Jewish national home. So Abdullah had to settle for a temporary arrangement, lasting six months, within the framework of the Palestine mandate and under the supervision of the high commissioner who would appoint a British adviser in Amman to help the amir to set up the administration. During this period, the amir was to receive from the British government a monthly subsidy of £5,000 to enable him to recruit a local force for the preservation of order in Transjordan. Thus, by the stroke of a pen on a Sunday afternoon, as Churchill was later to boast, he had created the amirate of Transjordan.

In April 1921 the first government was formed in Transjordan. The initial six months were full of problems as Abdullah, who was extravagant and absurdly generous towards his friends, squandered his allowances and indulged in an orgy of maladministration, while the country was swarming with Syrians bent on taking up arms against the French. Nevertheless, towards the end of the year, the temporary arrangement was given permanence when the British government formally recognized 'the existence of an

independent constitutional government under the rule of His Excellency the Amir Abdullah Ibn Husayn', subject to the establishment of a constitutional regime and the conclusion of an agreement that would enable Britain to fulfil her international obligations in respect of this territory. This was the first step in a new trend which crept into Britain's policy, that of separating Transjordan from Palestine. The second step was taken in 1922 when Britain, in the face of strong Zionist opposition, obtained the necessary approval from the League of Nations for excluding the territory of Transjordan from the provisions of the Palestine mandate relating to the Jewish national home. In May 1923, the British government granted Transjordan its independence with Abdullah as ruler, and with St John Philby ('Philby of Arabia') as chief representative to administer a £150,000 grant-in-aid. It was largely Abdullah's own failure to fulfil the condition of constitutional government which prolonged the dependent status of Transjordan for another five years, until the conclusion of the 1928 agreement.

Another reason for the delay is to be found in the progressive deterioration in the relations between the British and Abdullah's illustrious father. At the Cairo conference some of the post-war problems in the Middle East were settled to the satisfaction of at least some of the parties concerned: Churchill got his 'economy with honour', Faisal got the throne of Iraq, and Abdullah got the amirate of Transjordan. In the summer following the conference, Colonel Lawrence was sent to Jedda to tie up some loose ends, only to discover that the grand sharif had become the greatest obstacle to the consolidation of Britain's Sharifian policy. Lawrence offered a formal treaty of alliance securing the Kingdom of the Hijaz against aggression, and indefinite continuation of the handsome subsidy paid annually to Husayn since 1917. But the obstinate old man, embittered by what he regarded as British bad faith and betrayal, refused to sign the treaty and angrily rejected the conditions that he should recognize the mandate system and condone the Balfour Declaration. The consequent removal of British protection and the British subsidy left the king of the Hijaz exposed to the tender mercies of his great rival, Sultan

Abdul-Aziz Ibn Saud of the Nejd. Only British diplomatic pressure and the payment of a subsidy to Ibn Saud had kept the rivalry between the two Arabian rulers dormant during the First World War—a rivalry accentuated by the support given to Husayn by the Foreign Office through the Arab Bureau while the India Office favoured Ibn Saud. After the war an inevitable trial of strength developed between the king who assumed that his sponsorship of the Arab Revolt entitled him to political authority over his neighbours and the chieftain whose determination revived the Wahabi movement and endowed it with a cutting military edge. The first serious clash occurred in May 1919 on the eastern border of the Hijaz when Ibn Saud's forces almost totally obliterated a Hashemite army of 5,000 men commanded by Abdullah. So complete was their victory that only Britain's intervention prevented the Wahabi forces from marching on Mecca. The decisive battle broke out in 1924. Ibn Saud conquered the whole of the Hijaz, forced Husayn into abdication and exile, and inflicted on him the crowning humiliation of assuming the administration of the Holy Places in Mecca and Medina, the two most sacred sites of Islam. Thus ended ingloriously the dream of a mighty Hashemite empire, and by a cruel historic irony it was in its own ancestral home that the Hashemite dynasty sustained its most monumental and shattering defeat.

Husayn's eclipse gave a dramatic illustration not only of his own folly and the price of obstinacy but also of the immense power wielded by Britain in shaping the fortunes of the Arab nations and their rulers. The political shape of the region did not evolve naturally, following its own internal laws, but was largely the product of British design tailored to fit Britain's own imperial needs. It was not the Syrians who expelled Faisal nor was it the Iraqis who raised him to the throne in their own countries. Abdullah could not gain power in Transjordan without Britain's approval, and had he tried to do so in defiance of Britain he would not have survived for very long. It was not the Hijazis who invited Ibn Saud but the arms supplied to him by Britain that enabled him to conquer their country. And just as the withdrawal of British support paved the way to the decline of the Hashemite kingdom in

the Hijaz, so it was British protection, and only British protection, which could preserve the Hashemite amirate in Transjordan.

Ibn Saud was not content with his victory over Husayn. Driven by political ambition to expand his own realm and by the religious zeal of the Wahabi reform movement, he turned northwards with the intent of completing the destruction of the effete house of Hashem. Abdullah's incorporation of the provinces of Maan and Akaba, which formerly belonged to the kingdom of the Hijaz, into the amirate of Transjordan exacerbated the poor relations between the two rival dynasties. In 1924 Wahabi forces crossed the border into Transjordan, and had it not been for the RAF squadron from Jerusalem and the detachment of British armoured cars which furiously mowed down the column of camelry, Abdullah undoubtedly would have met the same sticky end which had befallen his father. Ibn Saud did not abandon his designs on Transjordan, and the conflict continued to smoulder with occasional forays across the border and tribal clashes. The 1928 treaty, which recognized Transjordan's independence but left finance and foreign affairs under British control, was signed at the time when Wahabi raids were increasing. It was just as well for Abdullah that the British also undertook to defend the borders of the amirate because this time the Wahabis, fired by the fervour to sweep away all corruption and restore the pristine and puritanical brand of Islam, advanced upon Amman itself. Abdullah was quite firm in his friendship to Britain but none too firm in his hold over the amirate which faced an imminent threat of dismemberment by the fanatical Wahabi hordes. Once again it was only the swift and violent intervention of the RAF, this time assisted by the British-created Arab Legion, which repelled the invasion and kept the amir on his throne in Amman.

The principality which Abdullah had peacefully carved out for himself and from which he was in danger of being violently ejected was a political anomaly and a geographical nonsense. It had no obvious *raison d'être* and was indeed of such little political significance that the European Powers, in their generally acquisitive wartime diplomacy, tended to overlook it as an

unimportant corner of Syria. The status of this vacant lot, as we have seen, remained indistinct until Abdullah's unexpected arrival on the scene. Transjordan was then created by the famous stroke of Churchill's pen, in mitigation of the sense of guilt felt towards the sharif, and in the hope of securing a modicum of stability and order east of the Jordan river at the lowest possible cost to the British exchequer.

The borders of the new principality did not correspond to any particular historic, cultural, or geographical unit. Bounded by the valley of the Yarmouk on the north, by the Arabian Desert on the east, by the River Jordan, the Dead Sea, and Wadi Araba on the west, it had no outlet to the sea until Abdullah, with British encouragement, grabbed Maan and Akaba from the expiring kingdom of the Hijaz. Effectively, Transjordan was a strip of cultivable land 270 kilometres long with a width tapering from 80 kilometres in the north to nothing in the south, and flanked by a great deal of desert; with some 230,000 inhabitants, one railway line and hardly any roads, no resources whatsoever, and no revenue except for a modest British subsidy. The capital and largest town of this backward and primitive kingdom was Amman—a drab and dusty place which could not even boast a glorious past. It was perhaps not altogether inappropriate that this one-horse town should serve as the capital of what was essentially a provincial backwater. And it was in a modest palace on the eastern hill overlooking Amman that Amir Abdullah settled down, 'loyally and comfortably', as Churchill had hoped, with two official wives and a charming black concubine.

Abdullah's ambition and the Greater Syria scheme

But Transjordan was a very insubstantial principality for so ambitious a prince. The contrast between the barren and insignificant patch of territory assigned to him to administer on behalf of the British mandatory and Abdullah's own heart's desire could hardly have been greater. He saw himself as the moving spirit behind the Arab Revolt. Proud of his race and descent, he was moved by an unshakeable faith that the true destiny of the Arabs

lay in unity under Hashemite rule. Of Husayn's four sons, Abdullah was the brightest and most resourceful, and certainly the most ambitious; his family nickname was 'Ajlan'—the hurried one. From his father he inherited the belief in Arab greatness, the yearning to revive the glory of its past, and the vision of a mighty Hashemite empire and caliphate, but he did not inherit either the sanctimonious self-righteousness or the quixotic obstinacy which had brought his father's kingdom crashing down in flames. By all accounts, Abdullah, very far from being sanctimonious, was in fact the most irrepressibly individualistic, colourfully entertaining, resilient, and unpredictable member of the Hashemite clan. Kirkbride once described him as a 'king with a twinkle in his eye'. He loved pomp and ceremony but had a large store of good anecdotes and was also capable of laughing at himself. He was fond of poetry, horses, arcane customs, and desert lore. Yet, for all his love of tradition, there was an impish streak in Abdullah's character, and he took great delight in acting boldly, flamboyantly, and unconventionally.

Among Arab politicians Abdullah was never a popular or trusted figure. In his own way he was an ardent Arab nationalist, but the authoritarianism which marked his approach to the affairs of state and the confidence he exuded of being marked out by destiny to lead the Arab world to independence did not endear him to other Arabs, especially when they happened to be fellow kings and rulers in their own right.

Given his pride in his heritage, the faith that he himself was destined to play a commanding role, his penchant for playing for high stakes, and the vaulting ambition he had nursed since his youth, it was inevitable that Abdullah would regard Transjordan as only the beginning, not the end, of his political career. 'Much too big a cock for so small a dunghill' was Lord Curzon's comment on Abdullah in September 1921. Another contemporary described him as 'a falcon trapped in a canary's cage, longing to break out, to realize his dreams and passions of being a great Arab leader; but there he was, pinned up in the cage of Transjordan by the British'. Abdullah spent the rest of his life in a sustained attempt to project his political presence and influence

beyond the borders of Transjordan. Behind this attempt lay not merely a personal sense of grievance and destiny but a statesmanlike appreciation that Transjordan needed a regional role and a *raison d'être* if it was ever to become independent of Britain.

To this end Abdullah looked in all directions, but his greatest ambition was Greater Syria—Syria in its historical or 'natural' dimensions, encompassing Palestine, Transjordan, and Lebanon. Abdullah aspired to realize the vision of Greater Syria with its capital in Damascus, the hereditary seat of the Umayyad caliphate, and with himself as king and overlord. He consistently maintained that Transjordan was only the southern part of Syria, and that his presence there was just a prelude to the attainment of complete Arab liberation in the pursuit of which his family had sacrificed the Hijaz. The motto he adopted was: 'All Syria to come under the leadership of a scion of the House of Hashem; Transjordan was the first step'. The cherished notion of a great Arab empire which eluded the father would thus be realized by the son. The son deliberately eschewed precision in defining the territorial limits of Greater Syria. Rather than commit himself to definite borders, he preferred to leave himself the greatest possible degree of tactical flexibility so as to be able to adjust his vision to changing circumstances and to take advantage of opportunities as and when they presented themselves. The obstacles standing in the way of realizing this vision were indeed formidable, but Abdullah was never a man to construe difficulty as impossibility. While holding before his eyes this lofty long-term ideal, he kept his feet firmly on the ground and pursued practical policies with limited objectives. Nor was he under any compulsion to try to accomplish his design in a great hurry. Despite his nickname, he was not in a hurry but, on the contrary, conscious of the importance of patience and self-discipline in carrying through his self-appointed mission to ultimate or even partial success.

In the early years of Abdullah's rule, frustrated Syrian nationalists and enemies of the French mandate descended on Amman in droves. Some of them found their way into Abdullah's embryonic administration while others, the more militant ones, were

bent on pursuing their struggle against the French and even mounted some raids across the border. With Faisal keeping a low profile in Baghdad, and Husayn fighting a rearguard battle in his remote corner of Arabia, Abdullah emerged as a leading champion of Arab unity and Amman became a focal point for Arab nationalist politics. But the initial euphoria evaporated rapidly, and with the passage of time the gulf between his idea of Arab unity, based on Islam, autocracy, and the preservation of the old social order, and the younger nationalists' conception of unity as a means of attaining liberation from foreign rule and freedom and social reform at home, grew wider and resulted in mutual disenchantment. Abdullah's tendency to assume that what was good for the Hashemites was good for the Arabs did not gain him many friends, either at home or abroad. He himself began to focus more narrowly on his dynastic and personal interests at the expense of the broader political ideals. After the loss of the Hijaz to Ibn Saud and the expansion of his domain down to the Gulf of Aqaba, Abdullah settled down patiently to await opportunities for promoting his Greater Syria scheme. The scheme was modified following the death in 1933 of his brother Faisal. From now on he was to toy with various ideas for merging Iraq with Greater Syria, possibly in a Federation of the Fertile Crescent of which he, as the oldest member of the Hashemite family and the only surviving leader of the Arab Revolt, would be the natural ruler.

Abdullah worked industriously, if rather fitfully, to propagate the idea of Greater Syria, always harking back to Faisal's lost kingdom which should revert to himself just as Faisal's lineal heirs succeeded to the throne of Iraq. He cultivated assiduously a following in Syria itself and succeeded in enlisting the support of some of the conservative elements there: the Ulema (religious divines), the small landlords, and the tribal shaikhs scattered around the country. A not insignificant number of Syrians retained their monarchist sentiment and after Faisal's death in 1933 pinned their hopes on his aspiring older brother. But as long as the French remained in Syria and Lebanon, Abdullah's hopes had little chance of success, for the French regarded the Greater Syria movement as the unwary stalking horse, and Abdullah as

the direct instrument of sinister British plots to undermine their own position in the area. In actual fact the British had never encouraged Abdullah to pursue his claims to Greater Syria; after the departure of the French, when Abdullah's expansionist plans were directed perforce against his Arab neighbours, they actively tried to discourage him.

Caught up in Great Power rivalries and in the cut and thrust of inter-Arab politics, the Greater Syria scheme ran for decades as a leitmotiv in the affairs of the Middle East, provoking suspicion, antagonism, and outright hostility towards Abdullah. The attack on his scheme in the Arab world came from every direction. The Lebanese emphatically refused to become absorbed in a unitary Muslim state. The republicans in Syria, who had struggled for so long to achieve independence from the Ottomans and the French, were not about to surrender their hard-won gains by subordinating their country to Hashemite rule. They also felt that if there was to be a Greater Syria they were better equipped to lead it than the ruler from the Hijaz, and that its core and political centre of gravity should be Syria itself rather than backward and feudal Transjordan. The Hashemites of Iraq and the nationalist politicians around them thought that their country was the natural leader of the Arab world; they devised their own plans for a federation under their leadership and gave Abdullah little support. The Saudis opposed any plan which might strengthen the Hashemites and were determined not to let Abdullah extend his power outside Transjordan lest he be tempted to reconquer the Hijaz. The Egyptians added their opposition to the concept of a Greater Syria seeing the Hashemite bloc as their principal rival for hegemony in the Arab world.

By posing as the champion of Arab unity, Abdullah thus ended up by antagonizing most Arab nationalists both inside and outside the boundaries of Greater Syria. The nationalists came to see Abdullah as the lackey and tool of British imperialism in the Middle East; they perceived his expansionist leanings as a threat to the independence of the other Arab states in the region; and they were critical of his accommodating attitude towards Zionism and the Jews in Palestine.

It was a measure of Abdullah's commitment and tenacity of purpose that he never abandoned his Greater Syria ambition even in the face of such formidable opposition. Because he knew where he was heading and had never made light of the difficulty of getting there, the obstacles and problems he encountered along the road could not easily deflect him. If he could not get to his ultimate destination today or tomorrow, that was no reason to give up the journey: conditions might change for the better and obstacles could be overcome through patience and perseverance.

Moreover, for Abdullah, Greater Syria was not an all-or-nothing proposition, nor was there only one path leading to its realization. If the whole of Syria in its historic dimensions could not be brought under Hashemite rule, any extension of his domain would be welcome, in itself and as a further step in the right direction. Partial success might bring complete success; the road to Damascus might go through Baghdad or Jerusalem.

Without abandoning his larger goal, from the late 1930s onwards, Abdullah gradually began to change tack and to turn his thoughts and energy to Palestine. Palestine was only one of the four parts into which 'natural' Syria had been divided, and a small part at that. But for Abdullah it had importance out of all proportion to its small size. To want to rule over Palestine was not for him a vacuous ambition, nor was it an accident that at the very first meeting with Churchill he asked to be entrusted with its administration. Transjordan and Palestine were bound together by a complex network of political ties, trade relations, and routes of communication stretching back to the very distant past. The essential unity of the area lying on both sides of the Jordan, recognized by the League of Nations, was severed only by an arbitrary British decision which was opposed unsuccessfully by both Jewish and Arab inhabitants of the area. True, Abdullah had formally recognized the British mandate over Palestine and the Balfour Declaration—something his father had resisted to the bitter end—but he felt that he had no real choice in the matter. And there were compelling economic reasons for preserving the links between the two banks of the Jordan: Transjordan needed

the capital, the markets, the trained manpower, and an outlet to the Mediterranean Sea which only Palestine could provide.

To Abdullah's way of thinking, gaining control over Palestine thus represented both an important end in itself and a possible means to a still larger long-term objective. The British attitude, here as always, was an important factor in Abdullah's calculations. He believed that the British would not look with the same disfavour on his plans for Palestine as they had always displayed towards his Greater Syria plan. The other two factors which had to be taken into consideration were the Palestine Arabs and the Jews. Accordingly, Abdullah's policy for furthering his design on Palestine can be seen as operating in three distinct but overlapping circles: in his relations with the British, in his relations with the Palestine Arabs, and in his relations with the Jews. In all three circles he used the same method—personal diplomacy.

2

The Hashemite-Zionist Connection

Early encounters

Of all the political friendships cultivated by Abdullah, the most controversial, the least well understood by fellow Arabs, and most damaging to his reputation was his friendship with the Zionists. No other aspect of his policy provoked such intense suspicion, stirred such strong passions, or brought him so much opprobrium. Abdullah's motives for seeking such an understanding were indeed complex but they can be reduced to two basic and seemingly inconsistent factors: his fear of Zionism and his perception of the opportunity it offered him to realize his own goals in Palestine.

A newcomer though he was to the affairs of Palestine, Abdullah read the situation of the Jews there, and the politics of his Arab kinsmen, with remarkable clarity. Whereas the latter indulged in facile optimism and hopes of an easy victory until overtaken by the disaster of 1948, he never underestimated the power, skill, and commitment which activated Jewish nationalism in Palestine. Realizing that Zionism could not be destroyed or ignored, his strategy was attuned to circumventing it and minimizing the possible consequences of a head-on collision. But he was also shrewd enough to recognize at an early stage in the game that the force of Zionism, if rightly channelled, could turn out to be not a barrier but a help in fulfilling his ambition of a greater Transjordan. Jewish enmity could only weaken his chances of being accepted by the world as the ruler of Palestine. On the other hand Jewish acquiescence, especially if it could be purchased at the price of autonomy under his rule, might pave the

way to a greater Transjordan, incorporating part, or possibly all, of the Holy Land.

For the moderation he displayed towards the Jewish community in Palestine, Abdullah received praise from some quarters and was branded as a traitor in others. Both missed a crucial point because they failed to place the motives for his attitude in their proper historical context. They forgot that Abdullah received his political education in the Ottoman Empire where different ethno-religious groups enjoyed autonomy in matters of personal status and communal government within the system of millets. Although the Young Turks introduced new ideas, it seems that Abdullah never ceased to regard the Jewish community of Palestine as some sort of modern millet. Viewed in this light, the Jews of Palestine were potentially of great value for their technical skills, international connections, and reputed wealth, and Abdullah thought he could gain their goodwill by a generous offer of autonomy within a multi-denominational realm of which he would be the benevolent sovereign.

In his personal dealings with the Zionists, Abdullah was not hampered by any racist prejudice: hatred of the Jews did not burn in his heart and he stood above the fanatic anti-Jewish prejudices common among some members of his race. His unbiased and pragmatic attitude towards the Jews, while not unique, did stand in marked contrast to the anti-Semitism of Ibn Saud, which verged on the pathological. Respect for the Jews, the People of the Book, was in fact for the Hashemites a family tradition, consistent with the teachings of the Koran. Abdullah's father refused to condone the Balfour Declaration not out of blind anti-Zionism but because it safeguarded only the civil and religious rights of the Arabs, disregarding what he perceived as their inalienable political and economic rights in Palestine. He was not opposed, indeed he was agreeable, to let the Jews live in peace beside Muslims in the Holy Land on the clear understanding that all the legitimate rights of the latter would be respected.

Faisal was the first Hashemite to discuss with a Zionist leader the possibility of co-operation between the Arab and Jewish national movements. In June 1918, as the military commander of

the Arab Revolt, he received a visit from Dr Chaim Weizmann, the moderate Zionist leader, and their negotiations on this and subsequent occasions crystallized into the famous agreement signed by both parties on 3 January 1919. What is surprising is not that Faisal proved unable to ratify the agreement but that the talks ever got as far as they did. Although the Weizmann–Faisal agreement had no practical results, this episode in Hashemite–Zionist relations illuminates important trends in the thinking, expectations, and strategies of the two sides. Both sides based their strategy on an alliance with Britain, and it was the British who arranged the first meeting in the hope of allaying Sharifian fears of Zionism and of confirming them as the leaders of the Arab world. But while Weizmann sought agreement with the Sharifians at least partly so as to please the British, Faisal was interested in agreement chiefly as a means of furthering the Arab struggle for independence. Weizmann did not have any distinctive Arab policy of his own, having staked everything on the alliance with Britain. His policy was to a large extent only diplomacy, based on a very inadequate grasp of the political reality in Palestine and the desire to bypass local opposition to Zionism through agreement with non-Palestinian Arab leaders. Hence his sympathy for the concept of pan-Arab nationalism based on the rejection of a distinct Palestinian national entity—a concept implicit in the Anglo-Sharifian alliance. Hence the inflated hopes he pinned on cordial relations with the Amir Faisal, whom he described as the greatest of the Arabs and a lifelong friend. Instead of grappling with realities, Weizmann devoted his consummate diplomatic skills to eliciting festive declarations from the Hashemite sympathizer in the hope that his attitude would have permanent influence on Arab behaviour towards Zionism. Faisal was similarly moved by exaggerated expectations of Jewish financial support (Weizmann mentioned the staggering figure of £40 million) and of political support in Europe and the United States for Syrian autonomy under the Sharifians. Whether or not he had the authority to sign an agreement affecting the Palestine Arabs, Faisal went back on it once his own hopes for Arab independence were dashed, following a shift in Britain's position from

promoting Sharifian–Zionist co-operation to reaching a settlement with France. Let down by Britain and threatened by France, Faisal could not afford to go against the powerful nationalist tide running through Syria and Palestine. He was forced to declare that no separation of Palestine from Syria was acceptable, and that Zionist aspirations for a state clashed with Arab ideas.

Amir Abdullah was thus not the first member of his family to hold exploratory talks with Zionist leaders. The year after he got his principality, he embarked with them on the most tangled of relationships that was to last until the end of his life. To his early contacts with the Zionists Abdullah brought the self-confidence and flexibility in dealing with minorities that he had acquired under the Ottoman regime. His view of the Jews as fabulously wealthy and skilled in the way of the modern world also went back to his time in Istanbul where he first met Jewish physicians, merchants, and financiers. The Zionist leaders for their part could not fail to be impressed by the moderation and pragmatism of their new neighbour to the east and their policy in consequence acquired a pro-Hashemite orientation at a very early stage.

The first meeting took place between Amir Abdullah and Chaim Weizmann in London in 1922. Abdullah offered to support the Balfour Declaration if the Zionists accepted him as the ruler of Palestine and used their influence with the British authorities to procure this appointment for him. The offer was politely brushed aside but the traffic between the Zionists and Amman had begun.

The basic solution, which Abdullah advanced at different times and in ever-changing forms, was a 'Semitic kingdom' embracing both Palestine and Transjordan, in which Arabs and Jews could live as of right and as equals and, needless to say, with himself as their hereditary monarch. Another small detail in this scheme which is worth noting is that Jews living abroad were not to have an automatic right to come to Palestine, and immigration controls of some sort would have to be imposed to ensure Arab preponderance and keep the Jews to a minority status in this 'Semitic kingdom'.

There was never any chance of Abdullah's offer of autonomy

within a larger kingdom ruled by himself being acceptable to the official leadership of the Yishuv, the Jewish community in Palestine. The official leaders of the Zionist movement aspired to an independent Jewish state, and the offer of a limited autonomy under Arab rule fell far short of their expectations and was indeed incompatible with the basic aim of their movement. In the Hashemites they found a foreign Arab dynasty which could be used to bypass the opposition of the local inhabitants and to consolidate their toehold in Palestine. Confident in their ability to attain full independence and statehood by their own exertions, they were reluctant to place themselves under the benevolent umbrella held up by the Hashemites. They wanted good relations with Abdullah, but they had no wish to be his subjects. If this was the view of the Labour Zionists who dominated the political institutions of the Yishuv, further to the right were Zeev Jabotinsky's Revisionist Zionists who not only spurned any idea of subservience to an Arab ruler but were never reconciled to the partition of mandatory Palestine and continued to include the East Bank of the Jordan in their ambitious blueprint for a Jewish state.

Both Revisionist and Labour Zionists refused to come to terms with the exclusion of Transjordan from the Palestine mandate and both were intent on reversing the verdict of the 1922 White Paper, whether by political, military, or economic means. The Revisionists thought in terms of military conquest whereas the practical Zionists thought in terms of a more subtle and gradual process. It was Weizmann's belief and hope that 'the road along which we shall cross over to Transjordan will not be paved by soldiers but by Jewish labour and the Jewish plough'. Ben-Gurion defined his movement's ultimate goal as the independence of the Jewish people in Palestine, on both sides of the Jordan, not as a minority but as a community of several millions. He was strongly attached to the empty spaces east of the Jordan and maintained that the opinion held by some Zionists that Transjordan was not Palestine rested upon ignorance of the history and geography of the country. The eastern border in Ben-Gurion's map of what he ambiguously termed the 'Jewish commonwealth'

was not the Jordan River, but the Syrian desert, at the furthest edge of Transjordan.

With hindsight, the aspirations of the Hashemite amir on the one hand and of the leaders of mainstream Zionism on the other appear so divergent that it is tempting to conclude that any attempt to reach agreement on his terms was doomed to failure from the start. But it should be recalled that in those early days when the future of Palestine was anything but certain, both sides were flexible, both had room for manœuvre, both were interested in finding a basis for mutual co-operation, and each side could reasonably hope that its vision would eventually prevail. Deception and self-deception were thus present in equal measure in the traffic between them from the start.

Moreover, conflicting aims in the long run did not preclude practical co-operation in the short run. Weizmann and his colleagues always stressed that the Jewish revival in Palestine, far from being prejudicial to the Arabs, would be directed at promoting their material welfare and progress. Transjordan was in dire need of foreign capital and skills and through *rapprochement* with the Jews Abdullah hoped to obtain them. A number of Jewish businessmen and entrepreneurs approached Abdullah in the early years with projects that promised to contribute to the development of his amirate and, directly or indirectly, to his personal riches. On the steamer which took him to England in 1922 he met Moshe Novomeysky, a Jewish mining engineer from Siberia who wanted to set up a chemical plant on the Dead Sea, and reviewed with him the prospects of Palestinian–Transjordanian co-operation and the mutual advantage the two countries could expect to draw from the proposed chemical industry. In 1929 Novomeysky's Palestine Potash Company obtained the concession to exploit the enormous chemical resources of the Dead Sea. Similarly, in 1927 Pinhas Rutenberg, another engineer from Russia, was granted the concession to set up a hydroelectric power plant in Naharayim, at the confluence of the Yarmuk and Jordan rivers. Public opinion in Transjordan was very much against it on the grounds that it would precipitate mass Jewish immigration to Transjordan, but the agreement

was signed because it was to the material advantage of the amir.

Col. Frederick Kisch, the chairman of the Palestine Zionist Executive, records in his diary interesting details of an official visit he paid to Amman in 1924. After an elaborate exchange of greetings and homilies about the historic bonds between the Semitic peoples, King Husayn of the Hijaz, who was staying with his son, told the delegation that he was ready to give land to the Jews free 'provided they entered through the door and did not make a breach in the walls'. Amir Abdullah, at a later meeting with the visiting delegation, said that in his previous conversations with Zionist leaders, including Dr Weizmann, he had declared his friendly attitude, but it looked as if the acts of the Zionists were not as good as their word. He feared that the Zionists had secret intentions. After being assured this was not the case, the amir, echoing his father's sentiments, declared that provided the rights of the Arabs were secure, they would welcome the presence of Jews not only in Palestine but in other Arab countries. He stressed the importance of hastening a solution of the difficulties lest the Arabs should lose patience. Kisch's suggestion of forming a joint committee of Jews and Arabs to discuss the Palestine question under the chairmanship of an Arab prince (meaning Abdullah) failed to elicit a positive response from the Hashemite court.

Six years later, Abdullah issued an informal invitation to renew these conversations. Kisch was quite disposed to do so but felt constrained by the absence of a definite Arab policy on the part of the Jewish Agency—not in regard to matters of local relations between the Jews and the Arabs in Palestine, but in regard to the major issues that affected the neighbouring Arab states as well. A visit to Amman was duly arranged for February 1931 and Kisch once again went to pay his respects to the aged head of the Hashemite family, who had in the meantime lost his kingdom and was living in exile. Husayn recalled Kisch's earlier visit, declaring that what he had then said about kinship between Arabs and Jews had been spoken from the heart. He sent for Abdullah and told him that he should always respect that kinship and do his utmost

towards establishing friendly relations between the two peoples. Afterwards, evidently under the impression of his father's words, Abdullah relaxed his restraint and spoke freely about his past, about Arab aspirations, and about the Arab–Jewish problem in Palestine. Conflict between Arab and Jew would benefit neither, he said. He recognized and appreciated the Jewish connection with Palestine, which was even mentioned in the Koran, but a solution consistent with Arab aspirations for a united Arabia had to be found. His prime minister, Hassan Khaled Pasha, who participated in the talks, stated quite definitely that he saw no objection to Arabs and Jews from Palestine participating in the development of Transjordan.

As a consequence of Kisch's visit to Amman, a Jewish eye specialist from Jerusalem was sent to treat a cataract in King Husayn's eye and fit spectacles for Amir Abdullah. Undeterred by the efforts of the Arab Executive to spoil their relations, Abdullah sent Colonel Kisch a warm message of appreciation for his efforts in this regard. Jewish medical attention to the Hashemite family was not the only outcome of Kisch's visit to Amman. It was at this meeting that Abdullah and his prime minister sowed the seeds which rapidly sprouted into a large-scale project of organized Jewish settlement in Transjordan to develop some of its uncultivated land. The idea itself was not entirely novel. As early as August 1926, Abdullah had made an impassioned plea for Jewish involvement in the development of Transjordan:

> Palestine is one unit. The division between Palestine and Transjordan is artificial and wasteful. We, the Arabs and Jews, can come to terms and live in peace in the whole country, but you will have difficulty in reaching an understanding with the Palestine Arabs. You must make an alliance with us, the Arabs of Iraq, Transjordan and Arabia. We are poor and you are rich. Please come to Transjordan. I guarantee your safety. Together we will work for the benefit of the country.

The statement is indicative both of Abdullah's tactics for circumventing the obstacles to co-operation posed by the Palestine Arabs and of his desire to harness Jewish capital, skill, and initiative for the development of his backward country. Jewish capabilities had been demonstrated in Palestine, giving Abdullah

grounds for hope that Jewish capital and Jewish experts could do for the area east of the Jordan what they had done for the area to the west. Kisch was only too ready to oblige and asked one of his experts from the Jewish Agency to set up a Survey Office in Amman which would create a new and useful point of contact with Transjordan. Kisch's efforts in Amman generated goodwill and led to the discussion of various joint projects for construction work, drainage, and electricity but yielded no significant political results.

When Chaim Arlozoroff replaced Colonel Kisch as the political secretary of the Jewish Agency Executive in August 1931, he embarked on a more purposeful policy designed to strengthen the moderate Arabs and weaken the extremists and to develop conditions for a Jewish state on both sides of the Jordan River. The shortage of land in western Palestine rekindled the Zionist interest in the sparsely populated spaces to the east, both as an outlet for Jewish settlement and as a refuge of last resort for Arabs displaced as a result of Jewish immigration to Palestine.

Arlozoroff was able to build on the work of his predecessor in developing and expanding the Jewish Agency's links with the amir of Transjordan. In March 1932, accompanied by Moshe Sharett, Arlozoroff went on an official visit to the amir's palace in Amman. As it was his first visit, Arlozoroff had no specific proposals to convey but simply set out to make personal contacts and gain first-hand impressions. His principal impression was that Abdullah seemed a stranger in his own country; that he could not forget the Hijaz and that his entourage was made up largely of Hijazis whom he knew and trusted. Arlozoroff also attributed Abdullah's caution in political matters to his shaky power-base and the need not to offend the susceptibilities of his subjects.

Arlozoroff argued that the economic development of Transjordan could not proceed without a close link with Palestine and that the separation of the two territories was artificial. Transjordan needed access to the sea while trade and industry in Palestine needed a local market in order to grow, said Arlozoroff. Co-operation was bound to turn the two territories into one economic region. There were many instances of economic co-operation

between countries leading in time to political unity. The Jews had made great strides in developing Palestine and were ready to act in neighbouring countries in need of capital, energy, and skilled manpower.

Abdullah replied that he himself was not afraid of the Jews and that his outlook was broader than that of the man in the street who viewed the Jews as he would a ghost. He, the amir, understood that the millions of Jews in the world could not give up their control of international finance and go to Palestine to starve. And since he knew that only a minority of the Jews would seek a place in Palestine, he was not afraid of Jewish immigration. But whether or not the fear of Jews was justified, the fact was that this fear prevailed in Palestine and influenced public opinion in Transjordan as well. It created a political situation which had to be taken into account, and if the Jews wanted the kind of co-operation that Dr Arlozoroff referred to, it was their duty to dispel the fears and to establish peaceful relations with the Arabs of Palestine.

During lunch the Jewish visitors tried to correct some of the popular misconceptions about the collective system used in their agricultural settlements. The amir attacked these settlements for being breeding grounds of bolshevism and corruptors of morals. When the difference between political and economic communism was pointed out to him and his allegations of permissiveness and loose morals were rejected as being without substance, he persisted in arguing that economic equality and the collectivist way of life were contrary to the philosophy of Islam and to the traditions of the Arab inhabitants of the country. When invited to visit one of these settlements, the amir excused himself by saying that he could not ignore public opinion and what the press said. For the amir, Zionism's attraction clearly did not lie in its progressive social ideas.

The saga of Ghaur al-Kibd

One of the strangest episodes in the history of Hashemite–Zionist relations followed from Amir Abdullah's offer to lease some of

his own land in Ghaur al-Kibd, on the east of the Jordan, to Jewish entrepreneurs. The land, situated in the central Jordan valley between the Allenby Bridge and the town of Salt, was originally state property but was transferred to the amir's private domain in 1931. In the following year rumours reached Jerusalem that the amir was looking for capital to invest in the development of his land. Several unsuccessful attempts had been made to interest non-Jewish capitalists, and it was only after the amir had given up hope of finding any other source willing to undertake the work that rumours about his intentions began to reach Jewish circles.

Dr Arlozoroff was rather slow to react on account of the attendant political pitfalls, but two members of the Jewish Agency Executive, Emanuel Neumann and Herschel Farbstein, secretly went to see the amir to find out his real intentions. The amir told them that he would welcome Jewish economic initiative because it would help the country to develop. Jews and Arabs had much in common and should be friends, he said, and he felt that this project would promote the welfare of both. There was nothing startlingly new in these thoughts except for the fact that they were being uttered by the head of an Arab state.

In January 1933 the secret negotiations culminated in the signature of an agreement between the amir and the Palestine Land Development Company granting the latter a 6-month option to lease 70,000 dunams—the equivalent of 7,000 hectares or 17,500 acres—against a payment of £P500. The lease, if made operative, was to run for a 33-year period and was renewable for two similar periods against the payment of an annual rent of £P2,000 plus 5 per cent of the profits made in the process of cultivation. The amir also undertook to procure the necessary authority for registering companies and for admitting any number of workers required by his tenant for the cultivation of the demised area.

Despite the efforts of both sides to keep the deal secret, word got round and a storm of protest broke out in the Palestine press. The British authorities advised Abdullah that it was politically unwise to invite the Jews to settle and pressed him to renounce the

agreement; they warned the Jews that Britain could not be responsible for the safety of potential settlers. Behind the official British position lurked an unspoken fear that the emergence of an Abdullah–Zionist axis would weaken their own hold over the two parties and over the Fertile Crescent as a whole. Particularly worrying was the prospect that the deal would provoke Ibn Saud to move his forces against Transjordan and in the process upset the British presence there.

Under the combined pressure of the Arab nationalists in Palestine and the British authorities, Abdullah relented to the extent of telling the Arab press that he had never concluded a pact with the Jews. Behind the backs of the British authorities, however, he continued to renew the option and collect the payment for it. In 1935 he collected a lump sum of £P3,500 for a 4-year extension of the option, while his confidant, Muhammad al-Unsi, who conducted the negotiations on his behalf, received £P1,800 from the Jewish Agency for his trouble. The Jewish Agency seemed content to continue to pay for the option without ever exercising it. Clearly, it was not philanthropic instincts or any serious hope of eventual Jewish settlement in Transjordan that moved the Jewish Agency to keep up its payments to the amir, but the perceived need to secure the backing of an Arab ruler as a counterweight to Palestinian antagonism. What the settlement option did provide in this context was a thin veneer of legitimacy for what could otherwise be construed as the payment of a political subsidy.

In favouring the entry of Jews into Transjordan, Abdullah was expressing the wishes of many of his subjects, especially the land-owning shaikhs who were at least as eager as he was to lease their uncultivated land and much freer in giving vent to their anger with British interference. One of these shaikhs, Mithqal Pasha al-Faiz, head of the most important bedouin tribal confederation in Transjordan, the Beni Sakhr, went as far as establishing a new political party in May 1933. Named the Unity Party, it called for the removal of foreign officials from Transjordan and openly voiced its conviction that only Jewish settlement could save the country from the scourge of starvation which had afflicted it in

recent years. Another influential supporter of joint economic enterprises with the Jews and the sale of land to them was Rufayfan Pasha al-Majali, head of the Majali tribe and leader of the ruling party in the Legislative Council. To counter the persistent efforts of the bedouin shaikhs to put their barren lands to some profitable use, the British authorities pressed for the enactment of a law restricting the sale or lease of land to foreigners. But the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations pointed out that the mandate could not prevent either the amir or the shaikhs from voluntarily permitting their land to be colonized, and the Transjordan Legislative Council rejected the draft law and affirmed its support for an 'open door' policy for the Jews. The British, however, won the last battle with the enactment of a Nationality Law, which prohibited the leasing of land to non-citizens, thereby closing to the Jews the gateway to the Arabian peninsula that the Transjordanian ruler and tribal chiefs were united in wishing to keep open.

This setback did not end Abdullah's efforts at co-operation with the Zionists but marked the beginning of an intensified drive on his part to reach an understanding with them and to take a more active interest in the affairs of Palestine. If during the first decade of the amirate he had tended to keep himself aloof from developments there in order to consolidate his position at home, during the second decade he became increasingly preoccupied with the future of Palestine. It was in the early 1930s that he laid his claim to be first the religious leader and then the political spokesman of the Arabs of Palestine. With the Zionists he began to have more regular high-level contact, and the relationship became more political in nature after the move towards economic co-operation had been blocked. Moreover, the conflict between Arabs and Jews provided Abdullah with a lever for extending his own influence in Palestine with a view to bringing the whole country under his crown. To the Jewish Agency he usually offered autonomy within a kingdom under his rule, asking them in return to put pressure on the British government to accept him as the ruler of Palestine and, secondly, to help him finance

political activity designed to combat the Husaynis. The Jewish Agency was more responsive to the requests for financial help to combat common opponents than it was to pleas for diplomatic activity for a cause inconsistent with its own objectives.

The Arab Rebellion, 1936–1939

The influx of Jews from Hitler's Germany provoked deep anxieties and disturbances among the Palestine Arabs, and the ripples were felt in neighbouring states too. Abdullah, who was in close contact with the Arabs of Palestine and realized the genuineness and depth of their fears, repeatedly warned the British government of the disastrous consequences which would ensue unless it intervened to allay these fears with adequate safeguards.

Abdullah's forebodings came true in 1936 when the Arab Higher Committee declared a general strike with the aim of halting Jewish immigration, banning the sale of land to the Jews, and establishing an independent national government. The strike was accompanied by violent attacks on Jews and the spread of political disturbances which threatened to engulf the surrounding Arab states. The British authorities, who had persistently disregarded Abdullah's earlier warnings, now asked him to use his good offices to end the strike and prepare for the arrival of a commission of inquiry. Abdullah exerted himself to defuse the crisis by restraining his population; by influencing the rebels to appear before the commission; and by trying to persuade the Arab kings to adopt a united front, writing to them that the Arab–Jewish conflict would only find its satisfactory resolution in the holding of talks and not in the crossing of swords.

The specific proposals made by Abdullah for ending the strike were in line with the advice that he and al-Unsi were receiving in letters from Sharett. Renewal of the strike in July forced Abdullah to adopt a tough public stand against permitting the influx of Jewish immigrants to continue. Privately al-Unsi suggested the stoppage of immigration for a limited period or its diversion to Transjordan on condition that Palestine would be merged with Transjordan. Although the Jewish Agency did not

reply to this suggestion, Abdullah kept up his efforts to steer it towards a solution along these lines.

The Arab Rebellion in Palestine strengthened the conviction among the architects of Zionist policy that the way out of the imbroglio lay not in a temporary agreement with local leaders but in a permanent settlement with the Arab world. It was the 'slow road' leading through Palestine's Arab neighbours that Dr Weizmann recommended as the best way to get real results. Contacts with politicians in the neighbouring countries were seen as a way both of neutralizing their opposition and using their good offices to influence the Palestine Arabs. Amman was the main stop along this 'slow road', and the 'political subsidy' given by the Jews to Abdullah provided a basis for even closer political co-operation.

Yet Abdullah's political value to the Zionists remained limited because he did not come out squarely on their side but continued to steer a cautious course between the contestants. Considerable skill was necessary to preserve his credibility simultaneously as a loyal ally of Britain, a sincere friend of the Jews and an Arab patriot defending the rights of his Palestinian brothers. In letters and meetings with Palestinian leaders, including Hajj Amin al-Husayni, he proposed ways of ending the strike without loss of face and offered his services as a mediator between them and the British. To the Jews he urged acceptance of a temporary halt to immigration to enable the Palestinian leaders to call off the strike and quell the violence, and here too he offered his services as a mediator. Abdullah coupled his short-term remedy of a voluntary suspension of immigration with a long-term solution based on the reunification of Transjordan with western Palestine. The Jews, however, categorically rejected the former and side-stepped the latter.

3

A Judgement of Solomon

The Peel Commission

The British government's belated response to the outbreak of the Arab Rebellion in Palestine consisted of appointing a Royal Commission, with Earl Peel as chairman, to investigate the problem. Announced in May 1936, the commission was appointed in August to ascertain the underlying causes of the disturbances which had broken out in the middle of April. It was also asked to inquire more widely into the implementation of the mandate, British obligations towards Arabs and Jews, the existence of grievances, and to 'make recommendations for the removal and the prevention of their recurrence'.

The first to give evidence to the Peel Commission after its arrival in Palestine were the British officials who told their sorry tale of trying to run an administration in the face of the conflicting pressures of 400,000 Jews and nearly one million Arabs and the thorny question of land sales and immigration that had provoked the general strike. The overall effect of this testimony was summed up by Isaiah Berlin, a percipient Jewish observer who compared the mandate to a minor English public school: 'There was the headmaster, the high commissioner, trying to be firm and impartial: but the assistant masters favoured the sporting stupid boarders (Arabs) against the clever swot dayboys (Jews) who had the deplorable habit of writing home to their parents on the slightest provocation to complain about the quality of the teaching, the food and so on.' As the members of the commission listened patiently to the rival claims of Jewish and Arab spokesmen, the idea of a territorial division of Palestine began to take root in their minds.

Initial reactions inside the Jewish Agency were rather mixed.

Political Zionism had reached a dead end and partition offered a way forward to statehood. Weizmann, Ben-Gurion, and Sharett were generally in favour of partition. They were attracted to it as a way of securing independent control over Jewish immigration and settlement and they perceived it as an opportunity to realize the 2,000-year-old dream of a Jewish state—the ultimate if undeclared aim of the movement they headed. Chaim Weizmann was the most straightforward supporter of partition precisely because it involved a Jewish state. 'The Jews would be fools not to accept it,' he said, 'even if it were the size of a table-cloth.' Weizmann's natural optimism was not dimmed by the small area that was eventually allocated to the Jewish state. It was the beginning of a new chapter in Jewish history, he wrote. 'The Kingdom of David was smaller; under Solomon it became an Empire. Who knows? *C'est le premier pas qui compte!*' The same logic prompted Ben-Gurion's conversion to the idea. His greatest concern at the time was to increase Jewish immigration from Europe and an independent state was the best possible means to that end. His greatest fear was that in pressing for a state, the Jews would have to give up the mandate and that they might end up with neither mandate nor state. Yet, once he was convinced that the potential gains outweighed the risks, Ben-Gurion took the lead in turning partition into the cornerstone of a new Zionist policy. Moshe Sharett was also prepared to settle for a Jewish state in part of Palestine, but he thought it would be a tactical mistake for the Zionist movement to declare its readiness too early in the game.

Convinced that nothing less than the fate of the Zionist movement was hanging in the balance, Weizmann, Ben-Gurion, and Sharett spared no effort to create a favourable climate of opinion by the evidence they gave before the commission, by informal contact with its members, and by assiduous lobbying of British officials and members of Parliament. Consequently, the commission's selection of partition in preference to establishing a legislative council with parity or cantonization; the borders of the projected states; the idea of a population exchange between them; and the choice of Abdullah rather than the mufti to head the

Arab state were all influenced, if only marginally, by Zionist diplomacy.

The idea of Abdullah heading Arab Palestine was not part of the commission's original intentions, nor was it favoured by any influential British officials. Government circles in Jerusalem always saw Abdullah as more of a burden than an asset and none saw him as a decisive factor in the Palestine problem. For Foreign Office officials intent on solving the problem in a way which would placate the Arabs, Abdullah was an embarrassing ally since any preference shown to him was bound to arouse Saudi resentment. In the Colonial Office, too, the wisdom of elevating Abdullah was questioned, on account of his unpopularity among the Palestinians and the Arab world generally. Members of the commission, however, were favourably impressed with Abdullah in the course of an unpublicized meeting during their visit and they began to pin their hopes for a solution on him and on the Nashashibi National Defence Party. The British officials would clearly have preferred the mufti, but his defiant rejection of partition as a solution worked in favour of Abdullah and in favour of merging the Arab state with Transjordan. Moreover, though Abdullah took the precaution of reserving his position on the subject of partition, it was generally assumed that he would go along with it provided the Arab part of Palestine was incorporated in Transjordan.

In March 1937 word got out that the commission was giving serious thought to the idea of partitioning Palestine between the Jews and the amir of Transjordan. For some Zionist leaders this was welcome news, though they did not dare say so publicly; for most Palestinian leaders it was anathema. For them a possible take-over of parts of Palestine by Abdullah was almost as objectionable as the Jews being given a state of their own on Arab soil.

The Peel Commission did not issue its final report until July 1937. Its major finding was that the mandate was unworkable, since the aspirations of the Jews and the Arabs were mutually contradictory. Partition was the only method it could see for dealing with the roots of the problem, and in recommending it to the British government, the commission marked a turning point

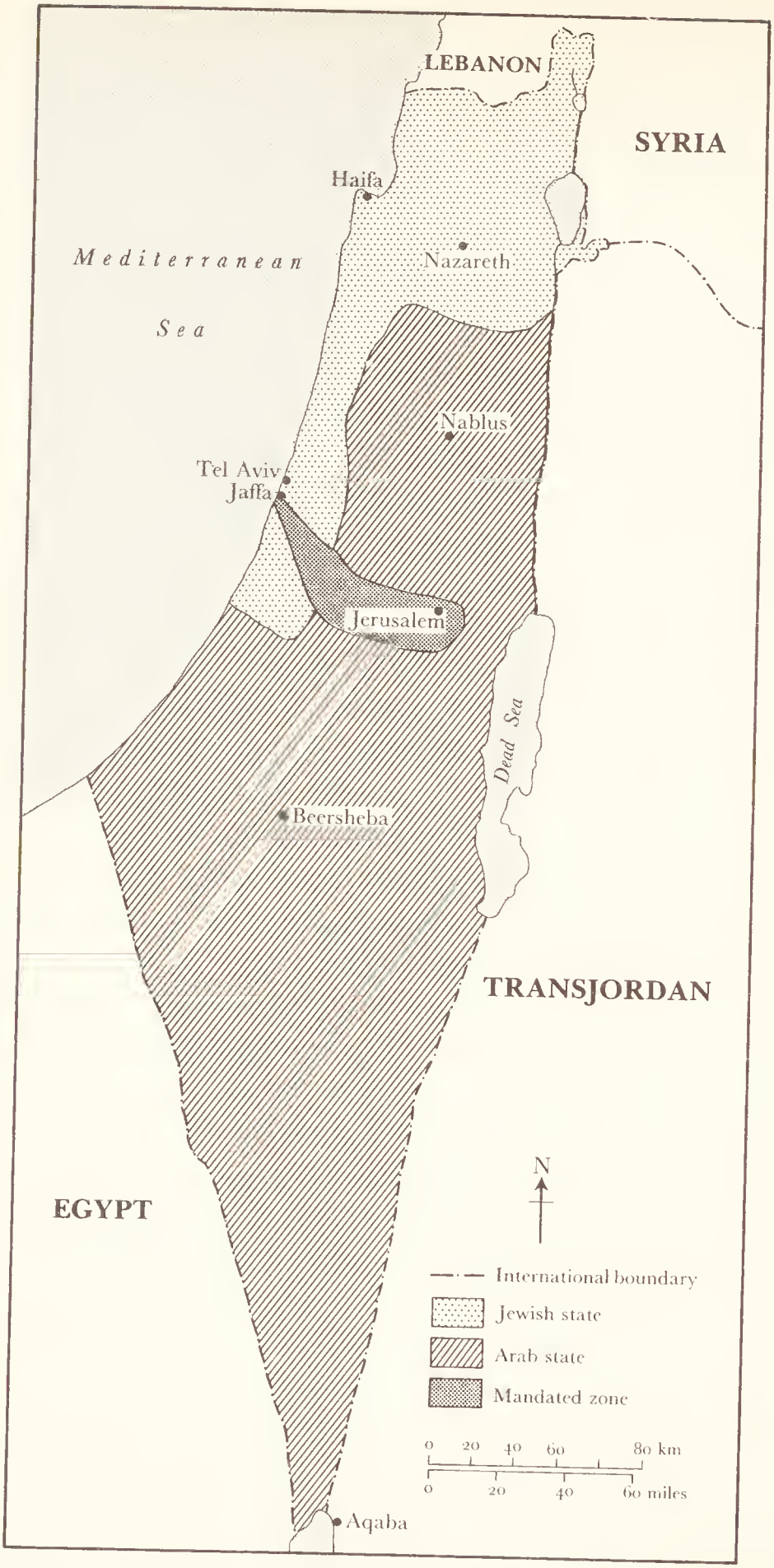
in the tangled history of efforts at peacemaking between Jews and Arabs. Though the commission's proposals were not acted upon, the principle of partition guided all subsequent exercises in peacemaking right down to the UN partition resolution of November 1947.

The Peel Commission envisaged a very small Jewish state —some 5,000 square kilometres—comprising the Galilee, the Jezreel Valley, and the coastal plain from Acre to Tel Aviv. All the rest of Palestine, bar an enclave from Jerusalem to Jaffa under a permanent British mandate, was included in the Arab state (see Map 3). The commission recommended an exchange of population between the two states, to avoid endless strife, and also a system of financial support for the Arab state from the Jewish state and the British government. It was also suggested that the Arab state be merged with Transjordan to form a United Arab Kingdom under Amir Abdullah.

Not unnaturally, Abdullah was overjoyed at the Peel Commission's offer of the whole of the West Bank, the Negev, Jaffa, and old Jerusalem, as well as a £2 million annual subsidy from the Jewish state and a £10 million grant from Britain, although he took care not to appear too enthusiastic in his acceptance of the plan. Partition and annexation of the lion's share of Palestine represented a recurrent theme in his well-publicized ambition over the previous fifteen years and was the specific objective for which he had lobbied during the commission's investigations.

The Arab Higher Committee promptly and vehemently rejected the Peel Commission's recommendations, insisting on full independence for Palestine and a ban on any further Jewish immigration or land purchases. It also launched the second and unexpectedly effective phase of the Arab Rebellion, thereby casting further doubt on the practicality of peaceful partition and accelerating the British government's retreat from its early pro-Zionist policy.

The Twentieth Zionist Congress met in Zurich in August 1937 to discuss the Peel Commission's recommendations. It was a stormy and passionately divided congress. Many of the most respected Zionist leaders were ardently against partition. Weizmann



Map 3 The Peel Commission partition proposal, 1937

and the majority of the Jewish Agency Executive, led by Ben-Gurion, were for partition. The difference between Weizmann and Ben-Gurion lay in the realm of tactics. Weizmann wanted to embrace partition with open arms. Ben-Gurion wanted the congress to reject the proposed partition but at the same time to empower the Jewish Agency Executive to negotiate with the British government a better scheme—to expand the area and authority of the Jewish state. A majority eventually voted for Ben-Gurion's motion but this was too late and too lukewarm and it did nothing to arrest the British government's wavering in the face of categorical Arab rejection. On the contrary, it provided the British government with an easy avenue of retreat from a path on which it was by now very reluctant to embark anyway.

With hindsight, 1937 came to be seen by many of the protagonists on both sides of that great debate as a major tragedy in the history of Zionism. The next world war and the holocaust which claimed the lives of six million European Jews were just two years away. The contrast between the great hopes which attended the birth of the partition idea and the signal failure to carry it to fruition was very striking and weighed on the conscience of at least some Zionist leaders. For had a Jewish state been created in 1937, even in a small part of Palestine, it could have saved the lives of hundreds of thousands, possibly millions, of those unfortunate Jews who later perished in the holocaust.

Abdullah's twelve-point plan, the London conference and the 1939 White Paper

Once partition had been effectively removed from the political agenda by Zionist equivocations, uncompromising Palestinian nationalist opposition and mounting British doubts, Amir Abdullah reverted to the opposite idea of a unitary solution for the Palestine problem. In May 1938, to everyone's surprise he sent the Woodhead Commission of Inquiry into the feasibility of partition a twelve-point proposal for the solution of the Palestine problem which was ingeniously framed to please the British, the Jews, and the Arabs without neglecting to further his own

interests. Palestine and Transjordan were to constitute a United Arab Kingdom in which the Jews would enjoy self-government and representation in proportion to their numbers. In the designated Jewish districts, the Jews would be permitted a 'reasonable' level of immigration but they would have no right to buy land or settle immigrants outside those districts. The mandate would stay in force for ten years, though the British presence would be only in a 'supervisory capacity' and Britain's strategic interests would be safeguarded. After ten years the mandate would be terminated and a decision taken on the final form of this United Arab Kingdom.

Once again Abdullah had put the cat among the pigeons. The Woodhead Commission declined to discuss his plan on the grounds that it fell outside its terms of reference, which were confined to implementing partition. Palestinian Arabs attacked him for failing to consult them and other Arabs before announcing his plan. The plan itself was variously criticized for not setting a clear limit to Jewish immigration, for entailing *de facto* partition, and for accepting the continuation of the mandate for another ten years before independence. The merger of Palestine and Transjordan, in the spirit of Abdullah's proposals, it was claimed, meant nothing less than capitulation to Zionist demands.

Abdullah hit back at his critics most forcefully. In a letter to the president of the Young Muslim Men's Association in Cairo, he presented his own analysis of the Palestine problem and the case for union with Transjordan, which he claimed it was his religious and racial duty to promote in order to ward off the impending calamity. 'The pillars of Zionism are three', stated Abdullah, 'the Balfour Declaration, the European nations which have decided to expel the Jews from their territories and direct them to Palestine, and those partisans of the Arabs who will accept no solution but are content with weeping and wailing and calling for help from those who cannot aid them.' Palestine was thus in danger of being overrun by another people. The remedy for Palestine's malady lay in 'a speedy halting of the danger and in reducing the attack, then in considering how to put an end to it once and for all. Procrastination will mean the end of Palestine.'

At several points in this revealing letter, Abdullah returned to the charge that the Palestinians at the political helm were failing to prevent their compatriots from selling their land to the 'Jewish usurpers' and that 'the Arabs are as prodigal in selling their land as they are useless in wailing and weeping'. To the contention that by union with Transjordan the Palestinians would forfeit their rights, he gave very short shrift: 'The inhabitants of Palestine are 100,000 more than those of Transjordan and would ably take over the leadership of the administration of such a united state. There would be a parliament to represent the people and an army to defend them. Finances would be unified and the state would be well patrolled and its gates shut to prevent clandestine immigration.' The letter concluded with a dire warning that Palestine would become entirely Jewish in two years if the present state of affairs was allowed to continue.

The British government did not respond to Abdullah's twelve-point plan, but in November 1938 it issued a statement of policy on Palestine that rejected partition as impractical and invited representatives of the Jews, the Palestine Arabs, and neighbouring Arab States to a round-table conference in London to consider the future of Palestine. The Arab leaders refused to sit at the same table and negotiate with the Zionists, thereby forcing Britain to hold separate consultations with the two sides. Amir Abdullah was powerless to influence the collective Arab position. The Arabs of Palestine acclaimed the mufti as their sole representative and demanded that he be accepted as such by the other Arab statesmen. The British, in need of stability in the Middle East in order to concentrate on the challenge posed by Nazi Germany in Europe, hurriedly retreated from the three main prescriptions of the Peel Commission: partition, an independent Jewish state, and a direct role for Transjordan. Instead, they now offered to grant independence to a federal state after a transition period of five years, with restriction on Jewish immigration and on the sale of land to the Jews. The Jewish representatives were desperately opposed to the British plan and even considered walking out of the conference. The Arab statesmen and some of the mufti's own supporters urged him to

accept it, underlining the magnitude of the British concessions, the value of having Britain on the side of the Palestinians in this struggle against the Jews, and the bright prospects it held out for further gains. But at this critical moment, when Arab leverage was at its peak, the leader of the Palestinian Arabs in effect rejected the British plan by insisting on a shorter transition period. A golden opportunity for creating an independent, unified Palestine was allowed to slip away. It was not the first blow inflicted by the mufti on the cause he was supposed to be serving nor was it to be the last, but it was probably the most devastating. Through the stubborn maximalism which had by now come to dominate his political outlook, he squandered the chance to have his own state, a chance that had emerged out of a unique set of historical circumstances. The London conference dispersed amid confusion and with an inaudible sigh of relief on the part of Abdullah and the Jewish representatives.

Disappointed with the failure of the Arab delegates to exercise a moderating influence on the mufti and his hard-line faction, the British government proceeded to issue, on May 17, a White Paper on Palestine, based on the proposals which had just been spurned by both sides to the dispute. The White Paper represented the best deal that the Arabs could realistically hope for at that time and it conceded their most important demands: a unitary state which would be granted full independence after ten years; the prohibition of land sales to Jews in large areas of Palestine; and a drastic cut-back in immigration for five years, after which the Arabs would have exclusive control over the immigration policy and would thus be in a position to terminate Jewish immigration altogether. The 1939 White Paper also implied retreat from the mandate and the Balfour Declaration, and recognition instead of the Arab right to self-government in Palestine. Small wonder that the 17th of May went down as one of the blackest days in Jewish history and that the Yishuv prepared to fight the White Paper tooth and nail. Incredible as it may seem, the Arab Higher Committee headed by the mufti also came out against the White Paper, in a move which was as damaging to its own cause as it was consistent with the pattern of senseless rejectionism for which it

was becoming notorious. Of all the Arab statesmen, many of whom conceded in private that the White Paper was the greatest victory in the struggle for Palestine scored by their side since the beginning of the mandate, Abdullah alone had the courage to welcome the White Paper publicly as a sound basis for co-operation between Britain and the Palestine Arabs.

Allies at war

The outbreak of the Second World War overshadowed the local problems of the Middle East and the conflict over Palestine remained largely dormant. The initial victories of Nazi Germany made a tremendous impression in the Arab east and tempted some Arab leaders, of whom the mufti was only the most notorious example, to throw in their lot with what looked like a model for success worth emulating and a force capable of overrunning the mighty British Empire. However, most Arab governments waited to see which way the wind was blowing before declaring their loyalty to the Allies. Abdullah was the only Arab ruler who pledged his support for Britain at the beginning of the war and who remained unswervingly loyal even during its most difficult hours. In 1941 he sent his army to Iraq to suppress the rebellion of Rashid Ali al-Kilani, a nationalist leader with strong pro-Axis sympathies and a close associate of the mufti. This intervention won him the gratitude of the Iraqi branch of the Hashemite family and of the British authorities, but it also led to his being branded as a lackey of British imperialism by many Arab nationalists.

The war may have dimmed Abdullah's hope for Palestine and Greater Syria, but it did not extinguish it. Two factors in particular helped to keep these hopes flickering. First, the exile of the mufti from Palestine in 1938 and his prolonged stay in Germany as an ally of the Third Reich created a power vacuum in Arab Palestine which his great rival showed no reluctance in trying to fill. Second, Abdullah's firm stand on the side of the Allies ended his isolation in the Arab world and enabled him to play a dominant role in the discussions on Arab unity which took place

in the later years of the war. Throughout the war Abdullah hardly missed an opportunity to press his own claims to Arab unity in the framework of a Greater Syria by addressing appeals to the political leaders of Syria, by issuing proclamations to the Syrian people, and by recruiting supporters in both Syria and Lebanon. Despite Abdullah's persistent lobbying, however, British support was never forthcoming, and the fact that he was not prepared to do anything to harm British interests as long as the mandate remained in force and the British remained in Palestine cast some doubt on the practical significance of his calls for a Greater Syria. It may well be that these calls were conceived by Abdullah, and were tolerated by the British, primarily as moves in the propaganda war against the Axis powers, to counter the appeal of the German promises which the mufti disseminated throughout the Muslim world from his headquarters in Berlin.

With the Zionists, Abdullah maintained close and friendly contact throughout the war, using Muhammad al-Unsi as the principal go-between. Several factors helped to strengthen these bonds of friendship, principal among which were common allies and common enemies. Both sides lent active support to Britain in the fight against Germany and consequently found themselves on the same side in the great divide created by the world war. For the Yishuv, co-operation with Britain was much more problematical than for Transjordan, on account of the British policy of restricting Jewish immigration to Palestine as laid down in the 1939 White Paper. A way out of this dilemma was found, however, and it was aptly summed up in David Ben-Gurion's slogan: 'We will fight with the British against Hitler as if there were no White Paper; we will fight the White Paper as if there were no war.' The best unifying factor, however, is a common enemy, and Abdullah and the Jews had in common not just one but two enemies: Hitler and the mufti. Hitler was the most diabolical foe ever to rise against the Jews in their long and tormented history. If his forces were to overrun the Middle East, it was not just political Zionism that stood to be crushed but the entire Jewish community in Palestine which faced extermination as total and as savage as that which was already claiming the lives of millions of Jews in central

Europe. The threat of Hitler's forces overrunning Palestine reached its highest point between July and October 1942, when Rommel stood at al-Alamein on the border with Egypt. Desperate and pathetically inadequate defence plans were prepared by the Haganah, the military arm of the Yishuv, to meet this nightmarish possibility. Pro-Hashemite circles in Palestine realizing that they too would be doomed in the event of a German victory, began to seek a rapprochement with the Jews. Since Abdullah was also affected by the threat of a German invasion, albeit not to the same extent, he was told about some of these plans and tentative ideas of co-ordinated defence were also discussed. From his perspective, the inevitable consequence of a German victory would have been the handing over of Palestine to Hitler's ally—the mufti. The political leaders of the Yishuv, for their part, though divided on many questions unanimously preferred Abdullah to the mufti as their neighbour to the east. Zionist influence was therefore used to further Abdullah's cause in London, helping to transform a relationship of good neighbourliness into an incipient strategic alliance.

From time to time Abdullah sounded out the Jews about his plans for the future of Palestine. These plans were invariably linked to his long-term ambitions for Hashemite hegemony in the Middle East. An important meeting took place on 11 November 1942, when Moshe Sharett and Elias Sasson went to meet Abdullah and held a number of conversations with him on the subject of Greater Syria. He made it plain that he wished to rule over a united Syrian-Transjordanian state to which Lebanon and Palestine would be federated. He also offered secret negotiations and agreement on the question of Jewish immigration to Palestine in return for Jewish financial assistance and propaganda for his cause in Britain, America, and Syria. Towards the end of the war Abdullah began to present variations on this federal theme. In January 1944 he proposed an administration in which Jews and Arabs would be represented in accordance with their numerical strength, and the inclusion of the whole of Palestine in a quadripartite federation with Transjordan, Syria, and Lebanon in which he would hold the position of king, president, or chairman.

Abdullah was very enthusiastic about this particular scheme, from which he expected numerous benefits for his backward country. To secure it he was ready to concede special rights to the Jews in Palestine and to the Christians in Lebanon.

The Jewish Agency, however, could not agree to a quadripartite federation any more than it could agree to any other variation on the federal theme. At the Extraordinary Zionist Conference held in May 1942 at the Biltmore Hotel in New York, a resolution was passed urging that Palestine be established as a Jewish commonwealth after the Second World War. This was the first time that the Zionist Organization officially came out in favour of a Jewish state in Palestine. This declared aim could be achieved in the context of partition but not in the context of a federation. Some Jews agreed to partition only because they regarded full sovereignty of the Jewish state as a measure of compensation for its limited territory. But if Palestine were to be part of an Arab federation, the Jews would always remain a small minority, even in the event of attaining majority status in Palestine. They were therefore reluctant to enter any political negotiations which did not concede at the outset the principle of an independent Jewish state. How to remain on good terms with Abdullah while rejecting his proposals for limited Jewish autonomy under his protection was a problem which the Jewish Agency was to encounter repeatedly after the end of the Second World War.

Post-war plans and strategies

For his wartime loyalty, Britain rewarded Abdullah by conferring formal independence on the erstwhile mandated territory of Transjordan in March 1946. The Agreement was replaced by a Treaty of Alliance, the Organic Law by a Constitution, the Legislative Council by a Parliament, and the Advisory Council by a Council of Ministers. Two months later, twenty-five years to the day since making his dramatic appearance in Amman, the amir was enthroned as king in oriental splendour and his amirate was officially renamed the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. But the change of titles did not betoken the acquisition of full-blown

sovereignty and the 'independent' kingdom remained heavily dependent on British subsidies and British security assistance for its survival.

In the foreign policy sphere, Abdullah began to strive more purposefully towards an agreement with the Zionists on the future of Palestine. Two changes helped him in this endeavour, the first of which had to do with personalities. Until his death in 1946 Muhammad al-Unsi, who reached the position of minister of the interior and deputy prime minister, served as Abdullah's principal emissary in his contacts with the Jewish Agency. Al-Unsi was well known, and disliked, by many Arab politicians for his friendship with the Zionists and his close contacts with the Jewish Agency. He was certainly not a man to withstand a bribe, and the charge that he betrayed his country for financial rewards seems not to have been entirely without foundation. Nor was it out of line with the practice of the Jewish Agency to pay Arabs for information and political services of various kinds. Al-Unsi supplied the Jewish Agency with valuable information about Jordanian, Palestinian, and inter-Arab affairs over a period of fifteen years but his motives were always suspect. He was not above deceiving either his master or his Jewish friends, and his reliability as a channel of communication between the two thus left something to be desired.

The man who maintained contact with al-Unsi on behalf of the Jewish Agency was Elias Sasson, who had been head of the Arab Section of its Political Department since 1937. Sasson was the most outstanding Arabist on the staff of the Jewish Agency and one of the leading architects of the Hashemite connection. Born in Damascus in 1902, he had grown up as an Arab among Arabs. As a young man he was an active member of the Arab National Club, which aspired to liberate the Arab world from Turkish rule. His public activities brought him to the attention of Faisal who asked him to launch under his auspices and at his expense an Arab newspaper named *Al-Hayat* to spread the message of understanding and co-operation between Jews and Arabs in the Middle East. The Paper enjoyed wide circulation for nine months but was closed down after the French entry into Damascus and the

expulsion of Faisal. Following the collapse of the Syrian hopes for independence and the closure of the paper he edited, Sasson went to live in Palestine where he transferred his public activities from the Arab national movement to the Jewish national movement. In 1933 Moshe Sharett, then head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency, recruited him into the Arab Section whose main function was to collect information and to cultivate friendly relations throughout the Arab world. During this stage of his career, which lasted until 1948, Sasson came into contact with hundreds of Palestinian, Transjordanian, Syrian, Lebanese, Iraqi, and Egyptian public figures, some of whom he had first become acquainted with as a student in Beirut or as a member of the Arab Club in Damascus. His natural empathy for Arabs, his fluency in Arabic, his broad understanding of the culture and mores of the Orient, and his remarkable grasp of the complexities of Arab politics enabled him to extend his circle of acquaintances and to carry out his task with great distinction. The difference in mentality and cultural gap that characteristically overshadow encounters between Israelis and Arabs was conspicuously absent in Sasson's case. Distinctive mental processes go with each particular language, and because Sasson was a native Arabic speaker the task of approaching Arabs, dealing with Arabs, and gaining their confidence came much more naturally to him than to any of his colleagues in the Jewish Agency.

Muhammad al-Unsi was one of hundreds of Arab public figures with whom Sasson tried to keep in contact, but his closeness to Abdullah singled him out for specially attentive treatment. After al-Unsi's death, Sasson began to have frequent meetings with Abdullah himself. Despite the wide gap in status, the two men developed a warm personal friendship and a close political partnership which were to be of crucial importance in the coming years.

The second and much more important factor in promoting a Hashemite–Zionist accord was the dramatic change that took place in Zionist policy in the summer of 1946. A much tougher kind of Zionism had been forged in the course of the Second World War, and the commitment to statehood became deeper

and more desperate in the shadow of the holocaust. At the same time there was a more sober and realistic mood at the top and this paved the way to the change in policy. On August 5, in Paris, the enlarged Executive of the Jewish Agency voted by a large majority to support the establishment of a viable Jewish state on an adequate part of Palestine. This meant the acceptance of the principle of partition and a retreat from the Biltmore resolution for a Jewish state over the entire area west of the River Jordan. It was generally assumed by the participants that the Arab part of Palestine would be joined to Transjordan and be ruled from Amman. Even Ben-Gurion, who was generally considered a militant, submitted to his colleagues a plan for the establishment of two independent states, 'Judea' and 'Abdallia'. The latter was to incorporate the hilly area west of the Jordan with its large Arab population and compensate 'Judea' with an uninhabited stretch of land to the east of the river.

Six months had elapsed since a senior Zionist figure had met with the head of the projected Arab state. But a week after the Paris resolution in favour of partition, on August 12, Sasson went to visit Abdullah in the king's winter palace in Shuneh, east of the Allenby Bridge. An attempt by Britain to break the backbone of Jewish resistance in Palestine and an invitation to a round-table conference to discuss the Morrison-Grady plan for four self-governing cantons linked up in a federation constituted the international backdrop to the meeting. Sasson had recently returned from a mission to Cairo where he had sought Egyptian assistance in breaking the deadlock between Jews and Arabs over Palestine. The senior government and palace officials he talked to realized that there was little chance that Britain would evacuate Egypt as long as the Palestine problem remained unresolved and a source of instability throughout the Middle East. They were therefore prepared to consider solutions based on partition, a binational state, or a federal state. But Sasson's greatest achievement in Cairo, and one which amounted to a major breakthrough for Zionist diplomacy as a whole, was to persuade Ismail Sidqi, the Egyptian prime minister, to agree to partition. Sidqi thought that it would be best if another Arab state supported Egypt in

taking this stand and in resisting the demands of the Palestinian Arabs. Accordingly, Sasson went to Shuneh to secure Transjordanian backing for the Egyptian attempt to get the Arab League to adopt partition.

During the meeting, which lasted an hour and a half, King Abdullah, at the request of his British allies, tried to influence the heads of the Jewish Agency to crack down on the dissident organizations responsible for the acts of terror and to agree to participate in the London talks unconditionally, notwithstanding their declared preference for a solution based on partition. Initially Abdullah suggested that the proposed federal plan would be better for the Jews than Peel's partition plan because, while not conceding a state, it opened the gates to immigration on a large scale. Later on, however, he declared himself to be a supporter of partition and the annexation of the Arab part to Transjordan. To Sasson's query whether he would continue to maintain this position, Abdullah replied that it largely depended on their reaching an understanding between themselves. Asked to elaborate, he added in strict confidence that he aimed to enlarge Transjordan's borders and to create one strong and unified Hashemite kingdom which would conclude alliances with Britain and Turkey and guard the British line of defence in the Middle East. Execution of the plan was to proceed in stages: (*a*) partition of Palestine and joining the Arab part to Transjordan; (*b*) the merger of Syria with Transjordan; (*c*) linking the enlarged Transjordan in a federation with Iraq; and (*d*) linking the Jewish part of Palestine in a federation or alliance with the Transjordanian–Iraqi federation.

Abdullah admitted that the British favoured postponement of all talks until after the Palestine problem was solved on the basis of their federal plan. The difference between him and the British, therefore, was one of sequence and not of principle. He saw partition and merger as the first stage, whereas they feared that it would arouse the hostility of the other Arab states and therefore preferred to start with a federal solution in Palestine.

The king also admitted that the Arabs of Palestine would not accept the federal plan, but nevertheless suggested that everything should be done to secure their agreement. Sasson's questioning of

the Zionist interest in such an outcome brought forth a detailed royal reply:

> First, so as not to close completely the gates of the Arab part and block the possibility of expansion. Second, so as not to assist with your own hands in the creation of an eighth Arab state, extremist and hostile, headed by your mortal enemies—the Husaynis. Third, it would be wiser for you Zionists to talk about the establishment of a Jewish state in two or three years when your numbers will be augmented by another hundred or two hundred thousand. Fourth, so as not to block the road to Transjordan's expansion and to the strengthening of the Hashemite family. Fifth, in order to ease things for Britain, improve relations with her and regain her sympathy for Zionism.

Still baffled by what he saw as contradictory arguments, Sasson wondered whether the king was for the federal plan or for partition. The explanation he elicited was that Abdullah was temporarily putting Britain's wishes before his own, but if the Jews believed they could get British, American, and UN support for partition he would back them. He was also confident that Iraq would back them even if it meant a rift in the Arab League. But he deemed the holding of secret tripartite consultations to be superfluous since he himself was authorized to speak on behalf of the Iraqis and in the event of the Zionists coming to an agreement with him, he would put them in touch with the head of the Transjordanian delegation in London.

Sasson wondered whether Abdullah had thought of ways of imposing the federal plan or the partition plan on the Palestine Arabs. Abdullah replied that he had thought of little else in recent weeks and had actually worked out a plan of action which he was prepared to share with Sasson if the latter could visit him again in a week's time. Abdullah urged Sasson to bring back on his return the Jewish Agency's final answer to three questions: (*a*) which plan was acceptable to them? (*b*) were they willing to suppress all terrorist activity against the British and to try and mend their relations with them? and (*c*) were they prepared to back him 'sincerely and with all their might' in implementing his far-reaching plan? Abdullah also asked Sasson to bring him £P10,000 as a first

payment. Asked why he needed the money just then and what was the total sum he expected from the Jewish Agency, Abdullah replied that over the next four or five months he needed £P25,000 to spend on the elections in Syria. His aim was to secure the election of a Parliament and the appointment of a government that would help him carry out the second stage of his plan, namely, the unification of Syria with Transjordan. This sum, claimed Abdullah, was small in relation to his needs, but the British had already promised him a sizeable sum for this purpose. Secondly, said Abdullah, over the next two or three months he would need £P10,000–15,000 to create a new agency representing the Palestinian Arabs, to supplant the Arab Higher Committee and implement the recommendations of the London conference. He had already talked to the candidates and had them approved by the British. When Sasson pretended that the sums envisaged by Abdullah, almost £P40,000, were rather large and he could not guarantee them, Abdullah said: 'He who wants to get drunk should not count the glasses', meaning that he who wants a state has to make the necessary investments. In Abdullah's opinion it was the right time to act, both for himself and the Jewish Agency, and he launched on a long explanation of the economic opportunities that would become available to an enlarged Hashemite kingdom.

As Sasson was about to leave, Abdullah took him by the arm and said: 'I am sixty-six years old. My remaining years are numbered. You do not have any realist Arab leader like me in the entire Arab world. You have two alternative paths: to join with me and work together or to give me up.' If the Zionists chose the first path, he said, they had to meet his requests unhesitatingly, unreservedly, and soon. If they chose the second path, God be with them, but they must stop talking about co-operation and common interests.

Getting authoritative answers to King Abdullah's proposals was not at all an easy task because one group of Jewish leaders, including Moshe Sharett, had been detained in prison by the British authorities since the crackdown on 'Black Saturday' while another group, headed by David Ben-Gurion, was in Paris. The

resourceful Jewish Agency officials in Jerusalem managed to get messages to and from Sharett by making a daily delivery of fresh milk in a container fitted with a false bottom. It was through this primitive mailbox that Sasson sought guidance from his leader. But the use of codes to reduce the value of the intelligence to the British in the event of detection did not make for trouble-free communication. Sharett detected in Abdullah's words some truth, some lies, and some illusions but the guidelines he prepared for Sasson's next meeting dealt with his questions one by one. Firstly, the Zionist movement had made clear and public its plan to strive for an independent Jewish state over the whole of or as much of Palestine as possible. That was the goal of the struggle. But if there was the prospect of an agreed solution with some influential Arabs, the movement would be prepared to pay a price. Of the various compromise plans under discussion, the movement preferred partition to the British federal plan, and by partition it meant the annexation of the non-Jewish part of Palestine to Transjordan with some minor territorial adjustments in favour of the Jewish state. Secondly, if the British genuinely wanted to improve relations with the Jewish community, it was up to them to make the first gesture such as releasing the detainees in time for the forthcoming conference organized by Bevin in London. Thirdly, Sharett was all for backing Abdullah provided there was a mutual agreement which obliged Abdullah to back them as well. As for 'the sweets', wrote Sharett in an obvious reference to money, it was evident that Sasson could not go empty-handed. He assumed that Sasson was reporting simultaneously to Paris but for his part Sharett felt that since they were dealing with a crowned king, they must 'steal, rob, mortgage and do without' in order to obtain £P5,000. Sharett was not one of those leaders who believed that the basic aims of the Zionist movement could be significantly furthered by the payment of money to Arab politicians who professed themselves to be friends, and his agreement on this occasion should be seen in the context of his movement's political weakness, international isolation, and growing rift with the British authorities.

On August 19, Sasson once again went to meet King Abdullah

in Shuneh. He was stopped and searched by officials on the eastern side of the Allenby Bridge. They found on him a number of Arab newspapers and the sum of £P5,000. Under persistent questioning Sasson stated that he had an invitation to see a high-ranking personality but declined to reveal the purpose of the meeting. Two hours later he returned to Jerusalem and when he was searched for the second time by the same officers, they found on him only £P1,000. Asked what he had done with the rest of the money, Sasson answered that it was none of their business.

The king was none too pleased when he saw that Sasson had only brought him £P5,000. To prove that the sum he had requested was trivial in relation to his needs, the king showed Sasson dozens of letters and papers from Syrian and Druze notables referring to serious plans and actual deeds. Some of them even spoke of armed rebellion. Seeing his visitor's incredulity, King Abdullah took from his safe letters from Hijazi tribal chiefs which went even further, referring to plans for reconquering the Hashemite dynasty's lost kingdom. All the letters bore recent dates and dealt with two subjects: money and arms.

Sasson then told the king of the unfortunate incident on the Allenby Bridge and broached the question of employing a go-between. Agreeing that it was in neither side's interest to have frequent visits from the director of the Arab Section of the Jewish Agency's Political Department, the king returned £P1,000, and asked Sasson to give it to one of his emissaries who was staying in Jerusalem to hold talks and collect signatures for the 'partition and merger' plan. This man, whom he recommended to Sasson as thoroughly reliable, would serve as the go-between.

Sasson asked whether the British and the Iraqis knew of Abdullah's plans and approved of them. The British, replied Abdullah, claimed that nothing concrete could be done for the time being; they held that the ground had first to be prepared but when the time came they would support him fully and generously. As for the Iraqis, only a small number of people, family relatives and loyalists, knew about these matters, and they supported him unreservedly. All the money he had spent to gain support in northern Syria came from that source. Upon completing

his explanation, Abdullah once again pressed for more money.

Acting on Sharett's instructions, Sasson raised the question of border modifications under Abdullah's 'partition and merger' plan, but was rebuffed with the observation that agreement in principle must precede the discussion of details. If border modification were to depend on him alone, Abdullah promised to be flexible. Besides, it was undesirable to raise the question when Ibn Saud was claiming Akaba and Maan. Sasson's insistence provoked a stern admonition: 'Don't be egotistical. Don't demand just what is good for you. Look at matters within the framework of the entire Arab Orient and its complications and not just within the framework of Palestine.' At this point Sasson offered a compromise, which the king accepted: to leave the detailed discussions of borders to their respective delegates to the London conference should the latter go in the direction of 'partition and merger'.

Abdullah explained that the Arab League's decision to insist on implementation of the 1939 White Paper was taken under pressure from the mufti and his men. The latter also demanded the boycotting of the London talks unless the mufti was invited but the Arab foreign ministers resolved to go without him. Speaking of the mufti, Abdullah observed that there was only one solution—to remove him from the scene. When Sasson recoiled, Abdullah added that he was ready to take it upon himself to arrange it. 'This man', he added, 'is the greatest obstacle to settling matters in Palestine, Transjordan, and Syria, he is hostile to you and to me, and he must be removed from the scene at any price and quickly.' The significance of this suggestion was not lost on the Jewish representative, but the only response it evoked was a troubled silence.

Abdullah had one final piece of advice for his Jewish friends: to resist every plan except 'partition and merger' which they should do everything in their power to attain. By doing so, he explained, they would jointly pave the way for the possibility that Britain would impose the federal solution on them and on the Palestine Arabs. This, he said, would represent a net gain. Admittedly, it would not give the Jews full satisfaction, but it could deal once

and for all with the opposition of the Palestine Arabs to any solution which did not satisfy their demands. In the meantime, the immigration of 100,000 Jews would be made possible and they would be drawn closer to the Arab world. Thus, with typically devious tactics, Abdullah proposed that they proceed by a partition route towards a federal destination, thereby throwing dust into their opponents' eyes along the road.

The two meetings in Shuneh were useful in identifying at least some common ground between Abdullah and the Zionists and in providing a basis for future co-operation between them. Using the newly designated go-between, Abdullah informed Sasson that he had given the head of the Transjordanian delegation to the London talks two instructions: to support partition and to make contact with a member of the Jewish delegation. Sasson appreciated Abdullah's gesture and later followed it up personally during his stay in London. Sasson also began to press for active Jewish support for Abdullah's planned take-over in Syria. His colleague, Ezra Danin, volunteered to meet Abdullah to examine the plan and supervise its execution. If it succeeded, Sasson pointed out, the new reality would have to be taken into account by the London conference. If it failed, their loss would be purely financial. Sharett was in favour of committing £P10,000 to the 'northern plan' though he was unclear as to Danin's precise role and the kind of control he would have over expenditure. But before any move could be made to change the regime in the north, a very unwelcome change occurred in the south: Ismail Sidqi fell from power. His resignation nullified the Zionist break-through in Egypt and rendered all his promises to support partition worthless. Abdullah was now the sole Arab leader ready to work for a compromise solution with the Zionists.

Retreat from the mandate

The chances of mediation between Jews and Arabs, limited enough at the outset, faded away altogether during the second stage of the conference which opened in London in January 1947. The Jewish Agency would consider no solution other than parti-

tion; the mufti-led Arab Higher Committee would settle for nothing less than immediate independence in the whole of Palestine. No amount of British pleading or British pressure could bridge the gap between the two sides. The moving force on the British side was Ernest Bevin, Labour's fiercely anti-Zionist foreign secretary. Bevin's last proposal went a very long way in meeting the needs of the Palestine Arabs but it was nevertheless rejected, as in 1939, because it fell short of satisfying the maximalist demands of their leadership. The Arab states feebly endorsed the hard line laid down by the Arab Higher Committee. Even Abdullah was forced to declare his opposition to partition; if only to scotch rumours that his army was poised to occupy parts of Palestine and Syria and rebut the charge of sabotaging Arab unity in defence of Palestine. On February 18 a very bitter and disillusioned Bevin announced Britain's decision to refer the Palestine problem to the United Nations. Thus, without any serious preparation, a political hot potato was about to be dumped into the lap of the infant world organization.

To Britain's friends in the Middle East, news of her decision to wash her hands of the mandate was no less disturbing for having been expected. Abdullah feared that the decision heralded the eventual withdrawal of support from Transjordan itself. He made it known that he preferred Britain to solve the Palestine problem without the help of the UN. He declared that should the British evacuate any part of Palestine, his forces would immediately occupy it to save it from the danger of alienation. Reluctant as he was to see the British depart, he regarded their decision as irreversible and began to behave accordingly. A secret session of the Arab League opened in Cairo on 17 March 1947 to consider this unwelcome turn of events. In the course of its deliberations a consensus began to emerge in favour of implementing the secret decisions of the Bludan meeting of the previous June to furnish money, arms, and volunteers for Palestine so as to save it from a Zionist takeover and to apply economic sanctions against Britain and the United States. Transjordan's prime minister stated that his country reserved its freedom of action in connection with the Bludan decisions because his country was the second target of

Zionism after Palestine. He asked the council to note that Transjordan, not being a member of the UN, must retain the right to fight independently for Palestine. On the last day he reiterated the Hashemite government's decision to reserve its freedom of action in Palestine in order to ensure that the Arab character of the country was preserved. To all those present in Cairo it was clear that the Transjordanian delegate's references to the UN and to Transjordan's duties only served to mask his master's determination to keep a free hand for military intervention in Palestine in pursuit of his plans for territorial expansion.

The Hashemite dynasty raised the level of its diplomatic representation in the British capital. Prince Abdul Majid Haidar was appointed as Transjordan's minister in London, while Prince Zeid was sent as the Iraqi minister. The former was Abdullah's cousin, the latter his brother. These appointments were not accidental: they reflected the determination to be on guard for the coming battle over Palestine and Greater Syria and to steer developments in a way which would enhance the Hashemite dynasty's influence in the Arab world. A much more significant move, undertaken with the same intention, was the conclusion, in April, of a Treaty of Brotherhood and Alliance between Transjordan and Iraq. The allies under this treaty committed themselves to military co-operation against 'aggressors'—a term which could apply to other Arabs as much as it did to the Zionists. Syria on the one hand, and Saudi Arabia and Egypt who were lined up against the Hashemites on the other, were apt to view the treaty in this light. They also suspected Abdullah of wanting to make a deal with the Zionist 'aggressors'.

Abdullah justified his claim to Palestine as the first step in uniting Greater Syria. The two aims remained closely interconnected both in his policies and in his opponents' perception of those policies. The year 1947 marked the start of a more frenetic drive by Abdullah to realize his territorial ambitions. In this connection, the impending British withdrawal from Palestine represented both a threat and an opportunity for Abdullah. It represented a threat in as much as he was accustomed to depend on Britain to hold the ring within which he could manœuvre in relative safety.

Once Britain's firm hand was removed, Palestine was liable to be engulfed by chaos without any certainty as to who would come out on top. On the other hand, the very same fluidity which was bound to follow Britain's departure carried the prospect for enlarging his kingdom. It was the British, after all, who confined Abdullah to the east of the River Jordan as part of the political order they sought to maintain in the Middle East. It was they who kept the falcon pinned up in a canary's cage. Now the transfer of responsibility for deciding Palestine's fate from the mighty British Empire to the toothless UN offered him the chance that had been denied him for a quarter of a century—the chance to break out of the cage, to carve out a kingdom to the measure of his territorial, political, and material ambition, and to assert his mastery over the Arab world. London's decision to surrender the mandate over Palestine to the UN also marked a turning point in Abdullah's relations with the British, with the Arab world, with the Palestinians, and above all, with the Zionists.

4

Two Kinds of Partition

UNSCOP's inquiry

The transfer of responsibility for dealing with the Palestine problem from Britain to the United Nations compelled King Abdullah to reconsider his own position and the various alternatives available to him. A concrete policy objective emerged out of this process: the acquisition of the Arab part of Palestine and its merger with Transjordan. Abdullah's personal diplomacy in all the overlapping circles in which he operated was henceforth governed by this definite short-term objective. In the first place he had to co-ordinate his moves with Britain—Transjordan's protector and the principal imperialist power in the Middle East. Such co-ordination was all the more necessary since Transjordan was not a member of the United Nations whereas Britain was one of the permanent members of its Security Council. Secondly, he had to conceal his real intentions from the other members of the Arab League and from the Palestinian Arabs over whom he hoped to extend his rule, and this meant pursuing a pan-Arab declaratory strategy which was at total variance with his operational strategy. Thirdly, since acquisition of the Arab part of Palestine implied a partition of the country, he had to strive for an understanding with the Jews, who had their own territorial claims, behind the backs of his fellow Arabs.

Arab resistance to partition did not stem solely from their objection to the establishment of a Jewish state in part of Palestine but also from their disagreement on what should be done with the Arab part. Transjordan wanted to bring it under its own rule. Iraq supported this plan in the hope of merging with the enlarged kingdom of Transjordan and thereby gaining access to the Mediterranean. Syria and Lebanon opposed the enlargement of Transjordan for fear that it might jeopardize their independ-

ence and lead to the realization of the Greater Syria plan. Saudi Arabia was opposed to any change in the status quo which would extend the borders and strengthen the Hashemites of Transjordan and Iraq, lest they be tempted to try to reconquer their ancestral land in the Hijaz. The Arab Higher Committee was opposed to any partition plan so as to rule out altogether the possibility of merging the Arab part of Palestine with any of the neighbouring states. It took the view that the Arabs of Palestine had as much of a right to sovereignty as the Arabs of Transjordan, Iraq, Syria, or Lebanon, and that they had not struggled for thirty years against Zionism and the mandate in order to end up as the subjects of this or that Arab ruler but in order to become independent like the Arabs of the neighbouring countries. As for Egypt, it was opposed to partition so as to preserve as far as possible unity and solidarity within the Arab world.

These conflicting interests came to the surface during the visit of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) to the Middle East in July 1947. The Arab Higher Committee insisted on boycotting UNSCOP on the grounds that the case of the Palestine Arabs was clear and should not be subject to a new investigation; that the UN had no jurisdiction in the matter; and that the end of the British mandate could be followed by nothing except the granting of full independence to Palestine. King Abdullah made an unsuccessful attempt to persuade the Arab Higher Committee to call off the boycott, arguing that the Arabs should give evidence to UNSCOP and present their case before it. The representatives of the Arab states, at their meeting with the committee in Lebanon, were constrained to broadly reaffirm the rigid policy of the Arab Higher Committee, to reject partition, and even to threaten the use of force to prevent the establishment of a Jewish state in any part of Palestine. Arab diplomacy, with its tendency to adopt inflexible postures, created a very poor impression on members of the committee who had come with an open mind. It certainly eased the task of the Jewish Agency in presenting its case, in projecting an appearance of flexibility and moderation, and in gently nudging the committee in the direction of a solution based on partition.

Transjordan alone among the Arab states adopted a co-operative attitude and displayed some flexibility without breaking too blatantly the discipline of the Arab League. Having declined to send a representative to the collective appearances before the committee in Lebanon on the thin pretext that Transjordan was not a member of the UN, Abdullah invited its members to meet him in his capital. To cover himself against the charge of breaking rank, he stated in the invitation that 'Transjordan will take, as it always has, the same stand taken by the other Arab countries on the Palestine problem.'

The Chairman of UNSCOP and some of its members and staff proceeded from Lebanon to Amman where they were received by King Abdullah. 'They found the King to be a small, poised, handsome man who spoke only Arabic in a most musical cadence, and who smiled frequently as he spoke.' Abdullah parried all questions relating to the type of solution he envisaged, saying that there were many such solutions, but what was necessary first of all, was to adopt one solution and enforce it firmly and unhesitatingly. 'Whatever the solution,' he said, 'the incontestable rights of the Arabs must be protected. It will be difficult for Arabs to accept a Jewish State even in part of Palestine.' Would partition lead to trouble in the Middle East, he was asked. He smiled. 'The Middle East already has much trouble', he countered. 'If the Jews were treated justly in all countries, there would be no Jewish and therefore no Palestine problem.'

Abdullah's puzzling behaviour—first pressing for Arab co-operation with UNSCOP, then declining to participate in the discussions held in Beirut and finally meeting with it unilaterally and privately in Amman—gave rise to speculations that he had his own solution to propose which was not in accord with the Arab stand. In his public utterances, therefore, the king adopted a more uncompromising tone. He denied the very existence of the Faisal–Weizmann agreement which in 1919 promised 'the most cordial goodwill and understanding' between the future Arab and Jewish states in Palestine. He also denied having made unflattering remarks about the mufti, and sent the latter a collection of newly issued stamps depicting the deliverance of Palestine. But

the secret sessions of UNSCOP in Amman, at which the relations between Abdullah and the mufti and the possibility of joining the Arab parts of Palestine to Transjordan were allegedly discussed, created persistent suspicions in pan-Arab circles, and there was even talk of asking the Political Committee of the Arab League to look into the matter.

These suspicions were not entirely without justification. Immediately after the UNSCOP visit to Amman, Abdullah sent a message to Ernest Bevin to say that although for tactical reasons the Transjordanian government in its official evidence before UNSCOP had felt obliged to dismiss partition as a possible solution to the Palestine problem, he wished it to be known that these were not the real views either of his government or of himself. His real view was that partition was the only solution, and he hoped that every effort would be made to ensure that it was adopted. In the event of a partition scheme being finally promulgated, the question was bound to arise as to whether the new state should be independent or attached to Transjordan. Abdullah therefore wanted Bevin to know that in the latter event he would be perfectly willing to give his full co-operation and to take over all the Arab areas of Palestine, or as much of them as were offered to him, and to stand up to any abuse and criticism to which this action might expose him from the other Arab states.

The Jewish Agency was less indulgent with regard to Abdullah's equivocal performance during UNSCOP's visit to Amman. Reports of the private conversation and of Abdullah's failure to come out for partition reached the Agency, and Ezra Danin was dispatched to see the king. The king received him cordially and stressed at the beginning of the conversation that the agreement between them was valid and firm and that he was doing everything for the common cause. He was even prepared to sign a written agreement. But his general view was that the Jews were too impatient and that they would gain much by waiting a year or two.

As for the anti-Zionist stand attributed to Abdullah in the press, he denied having sent a telegram to UNSCOP's chairman expressing support of the Arab League's position on the Palestine

question. Secondly, he had not denied the existence of the Weizmann–Faisal accord, but simply explained that it was not binding because the conditions had not been fulfilled. Thirdly, he issued the stamps featuring defence of the Arab lands of Palestine in order to show that he was doing something whereas the other Arab kings were not doing anything. In proferring these explanations, Abdullah stressed that his position was exposed and that he was open to attack from Arab quarters.

Nevertheless, continued Abdullah, he remained faithful to the common cause and wanted to pursue his activities in Syria. The British had not stood in his way, but he had the impression that they wanted to preserve the status quo. The unrest among the Druze and the Kurds he attributed to growing communist influence in Syria. If only his four brigades could be enabled to fight, the whole affair would be settled very quickly. Danin construed this as an indirect request for additional grants from the Jewish Agency. He made no response to this allusion at the time but cabled Elias Sasson, who was active behind the scenes in Geneva, for his opinion.

Sasson, who understood better than any of his colleagues the inter-Arab constraints that limited Abdullah's freedom of action or at least freedom of expression, was on this occasion totally unsympathetic. He argued that the appearance of Abdullah and his men before UNSCOP's delegates had been thoroughly unsatisfactory. They had talked about everything except the 'partition and merger' plan, and by failing to mention their willingness to annex the Arab part of Palestine they effectively let the plan be dropped, thereby damaging Transjordanian as well as Jewish interests. So incensed was Sasson with Abdullah's failure to act in accordance with their pre-arranged plan that he suggested that no further payment be made to him until he committed himself to a clear and specific agreement in writing.

Sasson, who was expounding the virtues of partition to anyone in Geneva who would listen, found a very valuable ally in Omar Dajani, a Palestinian Arab who was politically close to Abdullah and served as his unofficial representative in UN circles. Dajani

kept in close touch with Sasson throughout his stay in Geneva and engaged in numerous private conversations with UNSCOP members and staff to influence them in the direction of partition. From this informal and ill-defined co-operation, he then went on to become a paid collaborator of the Jewish Agency. Sasson reported to his colleagues in Jerusalem that Dajani had reinforced Zionist lobbying in Geneva and asked them to treat Dajani with respect and trust and to take his proposals seriously.

Once he was back in Palestine, Dajani promptly established contact with Yaacov Shimoni, Sasson's deputy in the Arab section of the Jewish Agency's Political Department. Born in Berlin in 1915, Shimoni was beginning to make his mark as a Middle East expert with exceptionally good knowledge of Palestinian Arab society and politics. In his report to Mrs Golda Meyerson (Meir), who was acting head of the Political Department in Sharett's absence, Shimoni described Dajani as 'our envoy to Geneva'. In a meeting which lasted three hours, Dajani gave Shimoni a full account of his discussions with UNSCOP members, and of his successes in persuading them that partition offered the best possible solution. At this first meeting Dajani came across as boastful and prone to exaggerate his own achievements, but at the same time he impressed Shimoni as a sincere and competent individual, albeit a little audacious.

Dajani perceived his own role in the immediate future as covering three major areas. First of all, he wanted to visit King Abdullah and tell him that among the partition plans under consideration at the UN, not one involved annexing the Arab part of Palestine to Transjordan. Either Abdullah's evidence before UNSCOP was unclear or unsuccessful or it had been deliberately distorted. In any case, Dajani wanted to hear definitively whether Abdullah intended to act and whether there was any point in continuing the connection with him and working on his behalf. Should he find that there was no such hope, he was prepared to leave the king and to struggle for partition without him. Dajani's second aim was to buy the weekly newspaper *Al Hadaf* and turn it into an effective mouthpiece for himself and his associates. He hoped that the Jewish Agency would supply the £P800 needed to

buy the paper and thereafter contribute to the running costs. Thirdly, Dajani wanted to go to New York to help a group of moderate Palestinians who were opposed to the mufti to represent the Palestine cause before UNSCOP.

UNSCOP submitted its recommendations for solving the Palestine problem at the end of August in a majority report and a minority report. The majority report proposed the partition of Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state with an economic union between them and an international enclave around Jerusalem. The Jewish state under this scheme was much larger than that proposed by the Peel Commission, comprising the coastal plain, north-eastern Galilee, and most of the Negev. The minority report proposed a federal state in which the Jews would remain a permanent minority but with wide autonomy. The Jewish Agency gave the majority report a qualified welcome; the Arab League angrily rejected both. Azzam Pasha, the League's secretary-general, declared that any attempt to implement UNSCOP's recommendations would meet with total resistance on the part of the Arabs, and that if necessary they were prepared to fight.

The Political Committee of the Arab League met in Sofar, Lebanon, in mid-September to consider steps to be taken in the light of the UNSCOP Report. Transjordan was represented by its prime minister who claimed that his country was opposed to any form of partition. The meeting pledged its support for an independent Arab Palestine and its communiqué warned that any attempt to create a Jewish state would unavoidably lead to the outbreak of violence in the Middle East. In early October the Council of the Arab League convened in Aley, Lebanon, to consider preparations for military action in Palestine to prevent partition. It was resolved to implement the secret decisions of the Bludan meeting for the provision of money, arms, and volunteers to the Palestinian Arab community in the event of the solution adopted being in violation of Palestine's right to become an independent Arab state. But in view of Britain's imminent withdrawal and the existence of Jewish forces and terrorist organizations, the council also called on its members to alert their military forces along the borders with Palestine.

Abdullah accepted the decisions calling for military, economic, and moral support for the Palestine Arabs, but he strenuously opposed the proposal of the Arab Higher Committee for the immediate formation of a Palestinian government headed by the mufti. A small delegation led by Azzam therefore went to Amman to try to get the king to withdraw his objection, but their efforts served only to make him reiterate his convictions that a Palestinian government would fail to obtain international recognition on the one hand, would spur the Zionists to form a government on the other, and would thus render permanent the fact of partition.

The decisions taken in Aley represented a fundamental change in the Arab League's policy towards Palestine. Since its inception in 1945 and more explicitly since the Bludan meeting of June 1946, the Arab League had supported the creation of an independent Palestinian Arab state. In keeping with this policy, it had submitted a comprehensive plan to the London conference in January 1947 for ending the mandate in stages and ultimately giving complete independence to a state in Palestine whose regime would ensure an absolute majority of Arab inhabitants. Once the announcement of Britain's resolve to withdraw from Palestine transformed the idea of an independent state from a theoretical notion into a viable alternative, the Arab states began to renege on their commitment. At Aley they took a decisive step, going beyond the pledge to support the Palestinian Arabs in their fight for independence and opening the door to direct intervention by the regular armies of the member states themselves.

It is for this reason that the mufti was so critical of the Aley conference in his book *Facts About the Palestine Question*. At first sight his critique is surprising because the Aley decisions and the invasion to which they led were undertaken ostensibly in support of the Palestinian claim for independence in the whole of Palestine. But on closer examination it becomes clear that the role assigned to the regular Arab armies in the struggle for Palestine did indeed hinder the ability of the Palestinians to conduct the struggle in their own way. The decisions taken at Aley thus

involved a major reversal of past positions and a disservice to the Palestinian cause.

To implement the decisions of the Aley conference, a military committee was set up under the chairmanship of an Iraqi general, Ismail Safwat. General Safwat, assistant chief of the Iraqi General Staff, had had no duties for two years, having lost the confidence of the army as a result of the disastrous Barzan campaign for which he was responsible. He was described by one British diplomat as 'typically an old fashioned Turkish officer, extremely brave and unutterably stupid'. In the first report to the Council of the Arab League, he and his colleagues on the recently created Permanent Military Committee urged the recruitment and training of volunteers for Palestine, the supply of no less than 10,000 rifles to the Arabs of Palestine, the concentration of the bulk of the regular Arab armies on the border with Palestine, the use of aircraft to prevent supplies from reaching the Jews by sea, and the formation of a general Arab headquarters to which all these forces would be subordinated.

From the very start, however, Transjordan's attitude was one of scepticism and extreme reluctance to co-operate on the basis of the joint plans for military intervention in Palestine. Transjordan had in fact no direct representative and was represented by the Iraqi member. This arrangement was designed to make it easier for Transjordan to repudiate any unpalatable decisions taken by the committee. Draft instructions prepared by Abdullah for the Iraqi member representing Transjordan consisted of a long list of questions about the commitment of the other members. The king's main objective was to bring home to the committee the enormous practical difficulties it faced. A secondary purpose was to relegate the mufti and the Arab Higher Committee to the background and to nip in the bud the formation of armed forces under their command. The king's idea was that the General Headquarters should be in Transjordan and under his command. He also showed interest in the provision of adequate funds to meet unforeseen military developments. Fundamentally, he realized how little the Arab states could do in the military field and how unlikely it was that anything concrete would emerge from the

military committee's planning. Convinced that neither the Palestinians nor their Arab backers could forestall the creation of a Jewish state, the pliant Hashemite sought to incorporate the Arab areas of Palestine into his kingdom and then reach a peaceful accommodation with the leaders of this state.

Diplomatic and military preparations

Britain's opposition to the Greater Syria project and her ambivalence on the question of Arab Palestine, the growing likelihood that the UN General Assembly would adopt UNSCOP's partition plan, the Arab League preparations to fight partition and its support for forming a Palestinian government headed by the mufti—all underlined for Abdullah the importance of co-ordinating his entry into Palestine with the Jewish Agency. Regular contact with the official representatives of the Jewish Agency had fostered a measure of understanding and confidence that the contents of their conversations would not be disclosed to third parties and this greatly facilitated the task of co-ordination. In recent talks Abdullah's objective had been to persuade the Jewish representatives to agree to, or at least tacitly endorse, his plans for enlarging his kingdom at the expense of the mufti. Now the most immediate danger facing Abdullah was that the mufti, with the help of Syria and Lebanon, would pre-empt him in capturing some of the strategic positions in Palestine, leaving Transjordan surrounded by enemies on all sides. A related danger was that the Arab Legion would be whittled down in the course of fighting in Palestine, and the capacity of the Hashemite dynasty to protect its position in Transjordan and to assert itself abroad would seriously diminish in the process. A prior understanding with the Jews that he and they would divide Palestine between them was one method open to Abdullah for keeping both dangers at bay. Such an understanding would help him to secure the Arab part of Palestine while sparing his army. Since Abdullah was in a position to offer a promise of non-aggression against the Jewish state as the incentive for Jewish

complicity in his plans for the conquest of Arab Palestine, the elements of a deal were already in existence.

The Zionist leaders had their own reasons for seeking an understanding with their Hashemite neighbour. While international pressures were now working in their favour, the local balance of forces placed them at a grave disadvantage. They were aware that ever since the formation of the Arab League in 1945, Britain had been building up the military power of the Arab states and took into account the possibility that this power might one day be used to destroy the Jewish national home and thereby rid Britain once and for all of the troublesome legacy of the Balfour Declaration. The decisions of the Arab League's conference at Bludan in June 1946 seemed to confirm these suspicions. As chairman of the Jewish Agency, David Ben-Gurion repeatedly alerted his colleagues to the growing danger of an armed attack by the neighbouring Arab states and to the need to prepare for that eventuality by all the means at their disposal.

After assuming formal responsibility for defence matters, Ben-Gurion requested a proposal for reorganizing the Haganah to make it able to withstand an assault by the regular Arab armies. The proposal he received, towards the end of May 1947, assumed that the Arab States could mount an invasion of Palestine with a combined force of 50,000 ground troops and considerable air support. The Arab Legion was identified as the best of the Arab armies on account of its modern equipment and British command, and hence also as posing the greatest danger to the Yishuv.

Ben-Gurion and his colleagues were united with the military planners in seeing Transjordan's army as the most serious threat to their security. It was not its size but its quality and its strategic location in the heartland of Palestine that made that army such a serious threat. Given their estimate of the probability of invasion and of the relative strength of the Arab armies, it is not surprising that they should have sought an understanding with the master of the Arab Legion, even if it carried a political price.

In addition to the military considerations for wanting to neutralize the Arab Legion in the forthcoming confrontation, the

Zionist leaders had weighty political reasons for looking to Amman. The problem about an independent Palestinian state alongside the Jewish state as envisaged by UNSCOP was that the Palestinian state would inevitably be headed by the mufti and fellow members of the Arab Higher Committee whose profound hostility to Zionism and the Jews ruled out any chances of a compromise. Abdullah was the only realistic political alternative to the mufti and the ground was gradually laid for another high-level meeting with him.

Both sides were anxious to restore the good relations and trust temporarily shaken by Abdullah's meeting with UNSCOP. In early September Abdullah informed Sasson that he was ready to sign an agreement on the partition of Palestine involving the establishment of a Jewish state and annexation of the rest of Transjordan. Sasson was in Paris at the time and suggested that Ezra Danin be sent to start negotiations with Abdullah and to find out whether Britain stood behind him. If it turned out that Britain knew and approved of the plan, Danin was to promise Abdullah that the Jewish Agency would give him its fullest support in his fight against Arab opponents plotting to get Transjordan expelled from the Arab League. Sasson also urged that Omar Dajani be given the necessary funds to buy an Arabic-language newspaper to popularize the idea of partition along the lines recommended by UNSCOP. But before this suggestion could be implemented, Sharett ordered his subordinates to send Dajani to join him in New York.

In New York Dajani started talks with American officials, with the knowledge of the British, to secure American diplomatic recognition of Transjordan, and he cabled King Abdullah to ask for diplomatic credentials. Although Dajani appeared in the United States as Transjordan's representative, his expenses were borne by the Jewish Agency and he was in close touch with the Agency's officials. Intelligence reached Sharett from a Syrian source in New York that participation of the Arab Legion in the Arab League's military plans for Palestine was considered vital and that Iraq was pressing Abdullah to take part in the invasion of Palestine and to undertake to evacuate the country after the

establishment of an Arab state. Sharett therefore wanted Danin to meet Abdullah immediately and tell him that they were aware of his endeavours to gain American recognition and were anxious to support him. At the same time Danin was to warn Abdullah against any action which would destroy his chances of getting support and compel them to use all their influence against him.

Both the promise and the warning were promptly conveyed in writing. Abdullah sent back a message to say that he had not yielded to the pressure exerted on him during the Arab League meeting in Amman, and that all press reports on military plans and pan-Arab agreement were a bluff since no agreement had been reached between himself and the others or between the others themselves. Other sources independently confirmed that the pan-Arab front remained divided and that no military preparations had been agreed upon. These sources also indicated that the mufti's position was weak and that the main motive for his activation of disturbances on the 1936 pattern was his fear of Abdullah. It was therefore deemed necessary to alert Abdullah to the need to give a lead to his supporters in Palestine and start preparing actively for the occupation of the Arab centres of population. The planned meeting with Abdullah would provide an opportunity to apprise him of the situation in Palestine, although its main purpose would be to prepare a written agreement. Another minor purpose which the meeting was designed to serve was to inform the king of Dajani's success in negotiating American recognition of Transjordan and of the help he had received from Jewish quarters in furthering the king's cause in the United States. Dajani was most anxious to be appointed minister in Washington and he evidently counted on his Jewish friends to press his claims for obtaining the necessary credentials and fend off the rival claims of Prime Minister Samir al-Rifai who was also a possible candidate for the post.

King Abdullah and Golda Meir: the first meeting

The long-awaited meeting with the ruler of Transjordan was eventually arranged for November 17 and Golda Meir (at this

time still Golda Meyerson) was chosen to represent the Jewish side at this historic meeting. The initiative for holding the meeting came from the Jewish side.

Golda Meir went to see King Abdullah in her capacity as acting head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency. She was standing in for Moshe Sharett, who was conducting the diplomatic struggle for partition at the UN's temporary headquarters in Lake Success. She was accompanied by two of the Jewish Agency's Arab experts, Elias Sasson and Ezra Danin. On the way Danin, who had met with Abdullah on several previous occasions, briefed her on the king's general concept of the role of the Jews: he believed that Providence had scattered the Jews throughout the Western world in order that they might absorb European culture and bring it back to the Middle East with them, thus contributing to its renaissance. Danin also warned her that while the king was certainly sincere in his expressions of friendship, these would not necessarily be binding on him.

The meeting with Abdullah took place in Naharayim, at the house of Avraham Rutenberg, who had succeeded his father as the director of the Palestine Electric Corporation. The manager of the station, Avraham Daskal, who was also a liaison officer for the intelligence services of the Haganah, had made the elaborate arrangements for this clandestine meeting in close co-operation with his friend Muhammad Zubati who served as the king's private secretary and confidant. Sasson and Danin acted as interpreters since Mrs Meir spoke no Arabic.

Whereas Mrs Meir was visiting Naharayim for the first time, King Abdullah was a regular visitor there, ever since he had presided at the opening ceremony of the station in 1932. Relations of good neighbourliness had developed quickly between the amir and the first managing director of the Palestine Electric Corporation, Pinhas Rutenberg, and when Rutenberg died in 1942, his son, Avraham, kept up the friendly relations with the amir. Abdullah was particularly fond of Avraham Daskal, calling him 'Abu Yussuf' ever since hearing that, with two daughters, he was hoping for a son whom he would name Joseph. Twice a year, Daskal and Rutenberg and their wives were officially invited to

dinner at the palace in nearby Shuneh. Daskal could also visit Abdullah informally whenever he chose to, and his wife, Hannah, became friendly with the ladies of the palace. On appropriate occasions, such as the birth of Abdullah's grandson Husayn ibn Talal, attractive presents were given to Abdullah and other members of his family. He himself fully reciprocated this generosity, on one occasion presenting Daskal with a gold watch inscribed with his name: 'Abdullah ibn Husayn'. The Jewish friends gladly rendered any help they could to the friendly amir, such as fitting the palace with electricity and a water-pump and supplying electricity to the house of Abdullah's beautiful and devoted black concubine. From time to time Abdullah used to accept invitations to go and stay in Rutenberg's elegant white house in Naharayim. He, his personal physician, and Muhammad Zubati were usually given the second floor; the rest of the royal party were accommodated in a sumptuous tent. The animated conversations continued well into the night.

It was Daskal and Zubati who arranged for Mrs Meir to meet their royal friend. Zubati had a plot of land and a house near Shuneh, and it was there that he arranged lunch for Daskal, King Abdullah, and his retinue. After lunch, following a pre-arranged plan, Daskal invited the king to go back with him for the customary midday siesta. Golda Meir and her companions were already waiting in Daskal's home and it was there that Abdullah met her for the first time.

As they were sipping the ceremonial cups of coffee at the beginning of the meeting, the king was unable to conceal his astonishment that a woman should have been selected to head such an important political mission. He was told that Mrs Meir held the second highest position in Jewish diplomacy and that it was precisely because of the importance attached by the Jewish authorities to the meeting that she was sent in person. Recovering his poise, the king said that he appreciated the fact that Mr Sharett's successor had come to talk to him, and in an obvious attempt to put the interview on a friendly footing he invited Mrs Meir to pay an official visit some day to his palace in Amman.

In the course of the ensuing conversation Abdullah invited his

visitors to join him in thinking aloud: they had discussed partition in the past and he was interested to know what their current thinking was. But first he reported on recent developments in Arab affairs. Azzam had come to visit him and he was the best of the bunch, intelligent and of good character. Ibn Saud, President Quwatli of Syria, and King Farouk had all ganged up against Abdullah but he had held out and consequently everybody realized that he was powerful and that his army was a force of some value.

The Arab League's Council had visited him in Amman and dined at his table. He explained to them that he wanted peace, not war. He spoke without fear and said what was in his heart. They took the view that Palestine must take precedence over all other problems. Abdullah agreed but stressed that it did not mean that he was retreating from his Greater Syria plan. He was preparing a speech to make plain his hope for an eastern union which would include Greater Syria.

Turning directly to the Jewish envoys, Abdullah continued his monologue:

> Over the past thirty years you have grown and strengthened yourselves and your achievements are many. It is impossible to ignore you, and it is a duty to compromise with you. Between the Arabs and you there is no quarrel. The quarrel is between the Arabs and the British who brought you here; and between you and the British who have not kept their promises to you. Now, I am convinced that the British are leaving, and we will be left face to face. Any clash between us will be to our own disadvantage. In the past we talked about partition. I agree to partition that will not shame me before the Arab world when I come out to defend it. My wish is to take this opportunity to suggest to you the idea, for future thought, of an independent Hebrew Republic in part of Palestine within a Transjordan state that would include both banks of the Jordan, with me at its head, and in which the economy, the army and the legislature will be joint.

Noticing the unease evoked by this suggestion, Abdullah stressed that the Hebrew Republic would not be dominated by Transjordan but would simply be part of the Transjordanian monarchy. He did not press for an answer but simply explained

that in the event of such a republic being formed, his kingdom could be expanded to embrace Greater Syria and even Saudi Arabia.

Mrs Meir drew attention to the fact that the Palestine question was under consideration at the UN and that her side was hoping for a resolution that would establish two states, one Jewish and one Arab, and that they wished to speak to the king only about an agreement based on such a resolution. Abdullah said he understood and that it would be desirable to meet again immediately after the UN pronounced its decision in order to discuss how they might co-operate in the light of that decision. At this point Abdullah asked how the Jews would regard an attempt by him to capture the Arab part of Palestine? Mrs Meir replied that they would view such an attempt in a favourable light, especially if he did not interfere with the establishment of their state and avoided a clash between his forces and theirs and, secondly, if he could declare that his sole purpose was to maintain law and order until the UN could establish a government in that area. Now it was the king's turn to be startled and he answered sharply: 'But I want this area for myself, in order to annex it to my kingdom and do not want to create a new Arab state which would upset my plans and enable the Arabs to ride on me. I want to ride, not to be ridden!' He also brushed aside a suggestion that he might secure his objective by means of a referendum in which his influence would be decisive.

He then raised the question of implementing the UN decisions, given that the British were leaving and the Jews were demanding an international force. Would such action not look like a violation of UN decisions? Mrs Meir explained that it was not they who had demanded Britain's departure but that Britain herself had announced her refusal to help with the implementation. It was this announcement that had forced the Jews to demand an international force. They had nothing against Britain, she confided, and had the latter shown goodwill and undertaken to carry out the decisions of the UN faithfully and sincerely, there would have been no objection from the Jewish side. As it was, they did fear deliberate interference by the British. Abdullah then

asked whether he could convey this to the British and whether he could have it in writing in order to convince them. The Jewish envoys did not give a direct answer to this suggestion for fear of giving rise to additional complications, but they did make it clear that they were not disregarding Britain's interests. Abdullah preferred that the proposed solution be implemented by Britain, but if there was the slightest suspicion that she would not carry out the task willingly and faithfully he thought it would be better if she left the implementation entirely to the international force.

Abdullah expressed the wish that the international force supervise the Syrian and Lebanese borders with Palestine but not the Jewish–Arab border within Palestine. He would agree that Transjordan's border with Palestine be subject to international supervision though he saw no need for it. In any case, there was no need for a large international force; it should be only a symbolic one. Syria and Lebanon, he was confident, would not dare attack such a force. As for the Jewish–Arab border in Palestine, he was prepared to take the matter into his own hands and to ensure that no clashes took place between Jews and Arabs. Should the mufti attack the Jews, his advice to them was to reciprocate with devastating blows. It would be best, mused Abdullah, if the mufti were to disappear from the face of the earth!

The conversation turned to the preparations undertaken by the Arab world for intervention in Palestine. Abdullah claimed that he had notified the Arab states, including Iraq, that he would not permit their armies to pass through Transjordan. He had also given notice that he would not co-operate with any plan unless the arms, ammunition, vehicles, and workshops were concentrated in Transjordan under his command and for the express purpose of preserving order and reaching an understanding with the Jews. The situation and circumstances, he added, did not warrant war, but rather compromise.

As for the mufti, Abdullah said, he had demanded his removal to a distant place and the suppression of his activities. Were the mufti to be in Transjordan, he would certainly be able to take care of him! The Jewish representatives presented information

regarding an alleged plot by the mufti to provoke a clash between the Arab Legion and the Haganah by dressing up some of his men in the uniform of the Arab Legion. Abdullah promised to give the necessary orders to his army and remarked that such an incident was beyond the realm of possibility and that they should put it out of their minds.

The Jewish representatives also drew attention to the fact that many of the mufti's political opponents among the Arabs of Palestine wanted to be organized by Abdullah and to appear with him in the public arena as his followers and supporters of his views but they had been waiting in vain for an invitation from him. Abdullah knew this to be the case and had even received some letters from these opponents of the mufti. If he hesitated to invite them it was only out of fear that they might not stand up to the test and for this reason he preferred that they come without an invitation. He graciously permitted Sasson and Danin to direct these Arabs to him in droves.

When the Jewish representatives sounded out the king about the British attitude to his various plans and especially his plan regarding Palestine, all he could say was that the British had not demanded anything of him and that the situation was unclear. No talks had taken place on this subject and he had some difficulty in accounting for Britain's silence.

Ezra Danin, who wrote the report on the meeting for the Jewish Agency, noted that in contrast to previous meetings Abdullah looked confident and resolute and seemed to have the situation under control. He was equally dismissive of the talk of armed invasion by Arab states and of the mufti's intrigues. Asked if he would be prepared to sign a written agreement in the event of a common denominator being identified in political, economic, and defence matters he replied affirmatively and asked his interlocutors to produce a draft. In bringing the meeting to an end he reiterated that concrete discussions could only take place after the UN had made its decision and that they must meet again as soon as the decision was known.

Sasson cabled a summary of the talk with Abdullah to Sharett in New York. Because this is the only other contemporary first-

hand account we have, it is worth quoting extensively. He reported that Abdullah

> will not allow his forces to collide with us nor co-operate with other forces against us. Belittled military power [of] Arab states. Believed would not dare break into Palestine. In case he will decide [to] invade Palestine will concentrate [on] Arab areas with a view to prevent bloodshed, keep law and order, forestall Mufti. Prepared [to] co-operate with us [in] this matter. Stated British did not suggest him any scheme, neither anti-Jewish [nor] pro-Arab, only repeatedly emphasising earnestness [of their] decision [on] evacuation. Abdullah advises we press UN for small international force of few thousand to concentrate [on] Syrian Lebanon frontiers only. Believe position Mufti weakened. Not to be expected head of Arab provisional government with support [of] Arab world. Abdullah ready [to] sign written agreement with us provided we agree [to] assist attach Arab part to Transjordan. Replied we prepared [to] give every assistance within frame [of] UN Charter. Agreed meet after 25th of this month after UN decision . . . In conclusion Abdullah asked us [to] raise considerably our financial aid.

Sasson's cable corresponds accurately in all essentials to the more detailed account of his colleague Danin. Between them the two reports prove that in November 1947 the Jewish Agency succeeded in reaching a clear and explicit if not necessarily binding agreement with King Abdullah on bypassing the Palestinians and peacefully dividing the territory of the British mandate between themselves.

Abdullah once told Kirkbride that he had frequently obtained unexpected advantages by being willing to talk to anybody who was concerned with a problem and of being as charming as possible in the process. His charm did not fail him with Mrs Meir and helped to create a friendly atmosphere at the meeting. Kirkbride thought it a mistake, however, for the Israelis to be represented by a woman since Abdullah was very old-fashioned in his outlook, did not feel that women were the equals of men, and disapproved of their playing a political role. Moreover, the lady in question had little prior experience in dealing with Arabs and certainly none in negotiating with an Arab potentate. Royal dignity would have undoubtedly been better served if the other

side had been represented by a man, especially by someone like Sharett who spoke the language and was familiar with the mental process of the Arabs.

Nevertheless, the meeting was as satisfactory as could be expected and both sides had reason to be pleased with the result. That result amounted to much more than an exercise in thinking aloud; it laid down guidelines for action by both sides upon termination of the mandate. Abdullah secured Jewish agreement for annexing the populated Arab part of Palestine adjacent to his kingdom. Mrs Meir, inexperienced though she was, returned home with what amounted to a non-aggression pact with one of the leading Arab states. The ruler of that state and the master of the Arab Legion had promised that he would never attack the Jews or join with other Arabs in frustrating the establishment of a Jewish state. What is more, he was prepared to consider a formal pact embodying the terms of collaboration between Transjordan and the Jewish Agency. True, not everything said by Abdullah in the course of their cordial interview was music to Mrs Meir's ears: his remark about a partition which would not shame him in the Arab world implied that he expected a substantial, if unspecified portion of Palestine; his suggestion of a Hebrew Republic linked to the Hashemite monarchy of Transjordan implied that he was not resigned to the emergence of a sovereign Jewish state. These points were a source of constant uncertainty and worry to the leaders of the Jewish Agency in the coming months.

The mufti's impotent defiance

On November 29, only twelve days after the friendly meeting in the white house by the bridge over the River Jordan, the UN General Assembly convened in New York to pronounce its verdict on the future of Palestine. By a vote of 33 against 13 with 10 abstentions, the assembly adopted the partition plan recommended in UNSCOP's Majority Report. The passage of the resolution was accompanied by behind-the-scenes campaigns of unprecedented intensity and impropriety. The Arab states were helped by the oil companies in their campaign against partition. The Jewish lobby in the United States, with so much at stake,

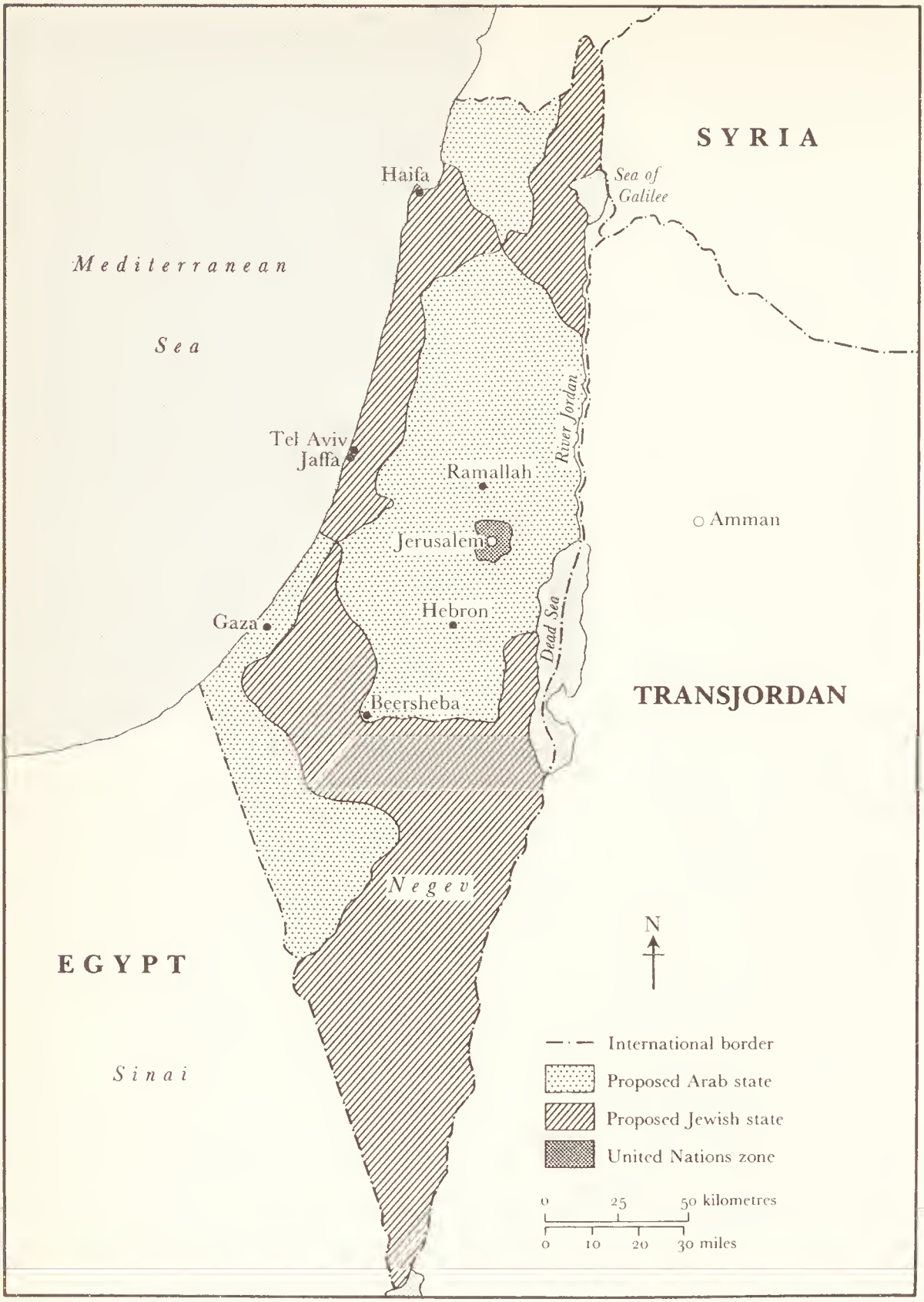
mobilized all its resources in the fight for partition and the tactics it used, involving threats, ultimatums, and bribes to Latin American delegates, were as effective as they were unsubtle.

The UN partition resolution laid down a timetable for the termination of the British mandate and for the establishment of a Jewish state and an Arab state linked by economic union, and an international regime for Jerusalem. Exceptionally long, tortuous, and winding borders separated the Jewish state from the Arab one, with vulnerable crossing points to link its isolated areas in the eastern Galilee, the coastal plain, and the Negev. Incorporation of the Negev in the Jewish state was one of the principal features of the UN plan. The borders of these two oddly shaped states, resembling two fighting serpents, were a strategic nightmare (see Map 4). No less anomalous and scarcely more viable was the demographic structure of the proposed Jewish state, involving as it did a very substantial Arab minority.

Yet the UN vote on November 29 was greeted by Jews everywhere with jubilation and rejoicing. While falling short of the full-blown Zionist aspiration for a state comprising the whole of Palestine and Jerusalem, it provided an invaluable charter of international legitimacy for the creation of an independent Jewish state. The UN decision alone could not guarantee the Jewish people a state of their own, but it represented a tremendous gain of international recognition and increasing momentum in its struggle for statehood.

Nevertheless, the Irgun, which had been founded in 1937 by the Revisionist Zionists, did not join in the general celebrations. It bitterly opposed the partition plan for carving up the homeland and warned that partition would lead to war. A day after the UN vote, Menachem Begin asserted the credo of the underground fighters: 'The partition of the Homeland is illegal. It will never be recognised . . . It will not bind the Jewish people. Jerusalem was and for ever will be our capital. Eretz Israel will be restored to the people of Israel. All of it. And for ever.'

The UN partition resolution was roundly and bitterly denounced by Arabs everywhere. Even before the opening of the regular session of the General Assembly, the Arab League



Map 4 The United Nations partition plan, 1947

charged UNSCOP with a pro-Zionist bias and served notice that the General Assembly's approval of either the majority or the minority scheme would precipitate an Arab–Jewish war, and probably a world war. The Arab Higher Committee labelled the two plans 'absurd, impracticable and unjust'. The United Nations was warned that 'not a single Jew would be allowed to migrate to Palestine . . . the Arabs will fight to the last man to defend their country, to defend its integrity and to preserve it as an Arab country'.

The passage of the partition resolution in the General Assembly was accompanied by renewed threats from the Arab League to resist its implementation by force. 'The partiion line shall be nothing but a line of fire and blood', was Azzam Pasha's ominous warning.

When news of the UN resolution reached Palestine, the various Arab factions closed ranks in face of the new threat and proclaimed a three-day strike in protest, beginning on December 1. The Palestine Arabs were now determined to abort the partition scheme by demonstrating that a Jewish state would not be tolerated and could not be viable. Unlike the Jews, the Palestine Arabs made no serious efforts to prepare for the day when they might have to fight to save their homeland. They had done very little since the brutal suppression of the Arab Rebellion by the British to rebuild their forces, to seek an effective military leadership, to acquire arms or to train their men in modern warfare. Politically the Palestinians were divided into factions linked to various outside backers. The Arab Higher Committee was re-created in 1946 not as a federation of parties, as in 1937, but by a decision of the Arab League. Control over Palestinian affairs and the representation of the Palestinian cause in international forums gradually passed from the hands of the Palestinians to the Arab League. This growing dependence on the League permitted the Palestinian factions to continue their internal bickering but it also eroded their capacity for independent decision and independent action. Egypt, Transjordan, and the other members of the Arab League manipulated their Palestinian allies to advance their own interests and used them as pawns in the game of inter-Arab politics.

Consequently, the Palestinians were singularly ill-equipped militarily and ill-prepared politically when the struggle for Palestine reached its peak. When the day of reckoning came, they had no political organization capable of asserting their national rights or taking over the government of an independent political entity.

Furthermore, the option of an independent Palestinian state side by side with Israel, along the lines of the UN partition resolution, was ruled out by the Palestinians themselves. They were unwilling to accept anything other than a state of their own covering the whole of Palestine. With the exception of the Palestinian Communist party, no Palestinian leader was prepared to accept publicly a Palestinian option that involved the partition of the country and the establishment of a Jewish state on part of it. The mufti and the Husaynis insisted on full sovereignty over the whole of Palestine and vehemently refused to accept a Jewish state of any shape or size in any part of it. The opposition to the mufti was weak and lacked the will-power for bold action. In private talks with the Jewish Agency the Nashashibis expressed their preference for peaceful partition and peaceful co-existence between the Palestinian and Jewish communities but not one of them had the courage to state this preference publicly. In these private conversations the Nashashibis also advised the Jewish Agency to talk to King Abdullah about a pro-Jewish solution, saying that they themselves could only follow his lead.

The Jewish Agency was thus left with only one option—a Hashemite one. Its choice was not dictated by ideological preferences but by the overriding necessity to find a serious Arab partner willing to accept the establishment of a Jewish state without war and peaceful co-existence with it thereafter. And in 1947 only one candidate fitted the bill—the neighbour to the east of the Jordan River. The opening to Amman was, in the final analysis, all the Jewish Agency had to work with in Arab matters.

The Jewish–Hashemite partnership was buttressed, as so often in the past, by hostility towards the mufti from both sides of the Jordan. For both sides the mufti represented a radical, uncompromising, and irrational element in the political equation. Both sides regarded any Palestinian state headed by him as a potential

base for hostile operations and as a threat to their own security. The UN partition resolution only served to crystallize the issues. Since the mufti himself rejected it, his enemies felt justified in working out their own plan for partition. They endorsed the first assumption of that historic document regarding the need for territorial compromise but they rejected the second assumption which called for the creation of an independent Palestinian entity.

The UN verdict thus helped to precipitate the final break between King Abdullah and the Husayni-dominated Arab Higher Committee. During the General Assembly's deliberations Abdullah began to send troops into Palestine to demonstrate that the Arab Legion was the only force capable of protecting the Palestine Arabs against the Jews. He also proposed to the Arab Higher Committee that in the event of a British withdrawal from Palestine, the Arab Legion, with its weapons and equipment, should undertake to look after the Arabs of Palestine and bring them under its control.

On November 29, Ismail Raghib Khalidi, the youngest brother of Hussein Fakhri Khalidi, the secretary of the Arab Higher Committee, visited Amman to convey to the Hashemite monarch the committee's negative reply to his offer of protection. While the two men were talking, news of the UN partition vote was announced on the radio. Abdullah turned to Khalidi and said: 'You have rejected my offer. You deserve what will happen to you now.'

Thus, by the end of 1947, not one but two partition plans had come into existence: one was born in New York on November 29, bearing the public seal of approval of the international community and calling for the creation of two independent states to replace the British mandate in Palestine; the other, secretly conceived in Naharayim, the progeny of a pragmatic partnership between the Zionists and the Hashemites, envisaged the creation of only one state and the annexation of the rest of Palestine to Transjordan. The second plan preceded the first chronologically by twelve days but was predicated on it. The Jewish community in Palestine was the principal beneficiary under both plans. The Arab Higher Committee and the majority of the Arab states were

irreconcilably opposed to the former plan and suspiciously hostile to the latter. Under the UN plan there was some recognition of Palestinian national rights, however inadequate in the Arab eyes, and the mufti was the obvious candidate to head the new Arab state. King Abdullah did not stand to gain anything under this plan but was the principal Arab beneficiary under the alternative plan for dividing up Palestine with the Jews. Herein lies the crucial difference between the two kinds of partition that sprang to life towards the end of 1947 in the attempt to jockey for the succession of the departing British Empire.

5

Mr Bevin's Little King

Arab pressures against partition

The United Nations' vote in favour of partition provided not just international legitimacy for creating Jewish and Arab states but, unintentionally, the signal for a savage war between the two communities in Palestine. Arab guerrilla operations against Jewish targets in Palestine started the day after the UN vote. Popular identification with the cause of the Palestine Arabs was spreading so far and wide that no government in any Arab country could take a stand which might be interpreted as betraying that cause without endangering its own survival. As popular pressure for intervention in Palestine was building up all around him, King Abdullah became increasingly worried about the prospect of carrying out successfully his own plan for gaining control over the Arab part of Palestine. The uncertainty surrounding Britain's intentions only added to his anxiety.

To the meeting in Cairo of the Arab League King Abdullah sent his Prime Minister, Samir al-Rifai, with strict instructions to be entirely non-committal regarding Transjordan's plans and to urge moderation on the other members. This meeting, during the second week in December, projected an outward appearance of strength and solidarity. It also reached important decisions but because of the conflicts of interest at play, these remained for the most part at the level of rhetoric and general principles. The basic resolution of the conference was to prevent the creation of a Jewish state and conserve Palestine as a united independent state. No general commitment to this course of action, however, still less willingness to make the necessary sacrifices, were revealed in the preceding deliberations. Most fundamental was the division about the military strategy to be adopted in fighting the Jews. The secretary-general of the Arab League and Egypt's prime minister,

Mahmud Nuqrashi, were against the use of regular armies, preferring guerrilla warfare conducted by the Palestinian Arabs to wear down the Jews psychologically and economically in a long war of attrition. They still had some hope of a diplomatic solution that did not involve the setting up of a sovereign Jewish state and they were wary of making commitments of a military nature that might be regretted later.

Hajj Amin al-Husayni also wanted his own irregular forces to wage guerrilla war and resisted the idea of direct intervention by regular armies but for somewhat different reasons. What he feared most was a deal between King Abdullah and the Jews that would allow the former to occupy the Arab part of Palestine as defined by the United Nations plan. To keep the Transjordanians out, the mufti thought it necessary for his forces to crush the Jews before the departure of the British from Palestine. But even if there was no deal, the mufti could not look with favour upon the intervention of the Arab Legion or any other Arab army for that matter. His aim was to set up a new Arab state over the whole of Palestine and he feared, not without reason, that if Arab armies marched into Palestine the country would be parcelled out between them.

It was exactly the same logic that lay behind the Iraqi and Transjordanian claims that the principal responsibility must be assigned to the regular Arab armies. The League Council took positive decisions to supply money, arms, and volunteers to the headquarters of Arab resistance that was being set up in Damascus under the direction of Gen. Ismail Safwat. Despite some ambiguity about the details, and the virtually unanimous consensus not to allow Hajj Amin to direct policy, these decisions fitted into the context of an uprising under Palestinian leadership rather than of intervention by one or more of the Arab states. As for the future status of Palestine, the League Council chose to defer its decision until it had been finally freed from the Zionist threat.

The real loser at Cairo was the mufti. Having had his political authority challenged by the Arab League at Aley, he now saw his claim to overall command of the military effort in Palestine

firmly rebuffed. To command the volunteer force that was being assembled near Damascus the Arab League appointed a poseur and adventurer by the name of Fawzi al-Qawukji. If one motive for this curious appointment was to blunt Abdullah's advantage, another was to marginalize the mufti. Hajj Amin fought the appointment for all he was worth, denouncing Qawukji as an Anglo-Jordanian agent, and insisted that the command of the Arab Liberation Army be entrusted to him personally or to his cousin Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni under his supervision. When all his protests were ignored, Hajj Amin turned to rebuilding his own forces, *Jaish al-Jihad al-Muqqadas*, or the Holy War Army. To lead this irregular force he gathered a number of Palestinian military commanders who had been active by his side in the 1936–9 Arab Rebellion, in Iraq, and in wartime Germany. Although the primary aim of this force was to prevent the partition of Palestine, it also represented Hajj Amin's answer to the challenge posed by his opponents in the Arab League. According to one report he even sent emissaries to the training base of the Arab Liberation Army near Damascus to encourage Palestinian volunteers to desert and join the Holy War Army.

In Transjordan a change of prime minister had been pending for some time, but Abdullah did not force the issue until after the Cairo meeting so as not to enable Samir Pasha to pose as the hero who had been compelled to resign by the king's unpatriotic policy of accommodation with the Jews. There was also the problem of finding a successor who would ruthlessly impose the king's kind of partition without trimming his sails to the winds of popular opinion. Tawfiq Abul Huda fitted the bill, and when al-Rifai resigned the choice fell on him to form a new government. Another consideration in favour of Abul Huda was that he enjoyed the confidence of the British. Not that al-Rifai had not been friendly and co-operative, but Sir Alec Kirkbride, the British minister in Amman and virtually the power behind the throne, had always found Tawfiq more discreet and stable than Samir.

Though Tawfiq himself was a Palestinian by origin he was untouched by Palestinian national aspirations and could

therefore be instrumental in promoting the kind of solution to the Palestinian problem favoured by the head of the British diplomatic mission in Amman. For a number of years Sir Alec, who was well informed about Arab opinion in Palestine, particularly in Galilee where he had served as district commissioner, had been pressing the view that if the Arabs were given a lead in favour of accepting inclusion in Transjordan, a large part of them could readily be persuaded to accept this. In Galilee the mufti was not at all popular, while Jerusalem, the stronghold of his family, was in any case excluded from the Arab zone. Kirkbride was therefore confident that with a strong British lead, a majority of the Palestine Arabs would opt for inclusion in Transjordan. He was no less confident that the annexation of the Arab part of Palestine to Transjordan represented the best possible means to preserve British interests in the region and to prevent the spread of Soviet influence.

Kirkbride had his own contacts on the Jewish side and he used them to engage in some discreet lobbying on behalf of his candidate. On December 19 he asked his friend of long standing, Avraham Rutenberg, the director of the Palestine Electric Corporation in Naharayim, for his estimate of the Jewish Agency's reaction to Abdullah's plans and was told that the Jews preferred Abdullah as a future neighbour to any other Arab ruler. In that case, suggested Kirkbride, the Agency might influence the United Nations to give Abdullah control over the Arab part of Palestine. Rutenberg conveyed this suggestion to Ben-Gurion but the latter declined to commit himself without further assurances about the intentions of his prospective opposite number in post-mandatory Palestine.

The green light

Towards the end of 1947 Kirkbride stepped up the pressure for some form of British endorsement of Abdullah's claim to take over the Arab part of Palestine. The main thrust of Ernest Bevin's foreign policy at that time was to make Palestine expendable through a system of defensive alliances to be concluded indivi-

dually with Egypt, Iraq, and Transjordan. In this new context, 'Mr Bevin's little king', as some of the Foreign Office officials called Abdullah, assumed the kind of importance in Britain's plans for the Middle East that had always been denied him in the past. Bevin himself was very receptive to Kirkbride's arguments in favour of basing British policy on Abdullah. Bevin had always thought that if partition had to be accepted at all, then the annexation of the Arab part of Palestine to Transjordan was the best solution. But now he was in an awkward position because Britain had abstained on the UN partition resolution and had insisted that she would play no part in implementing it. Supporting Abdullah's claim to the Arab part of Palestine was therefore logically inconsistent with Britain's existing policy. Secondly, as the Arab Legion was led by British officers and commanded by General John Glubb, anything it did was likely to be attributed to British influence behind the scenes.

Thirdly, if Britain were seen to be encouraging Abdullah to take the Arab part of Palestine, there would have been great resentment in many Arab countries, especially in Syria and in Egypt, against both Britain and her client. So it was not easy for Bevin to play his hand in this matter. The solution urged on him by his officials, in the best tradition of 'perfidious Albion', was to maintain an official façade of opposition to partition while secretly encouraging his 'little king' to carry it out. Bevin gave the green light to King Abdullah's plan for intervention in Palestine at a secret meeting in London with Tawfiq Abul Huda, held on the latter's initiative. Tawfiq Pasha arrived in London at the head of an official delegation in January 1948. The ostensible reason for the visit was to renegotiate some of the technical clauses in the 1948 Anglo-Transjordanian treaty, but the real purpose was to discuss Palestine. In view of the sensitive nature of the issue, Tawfiq Pasha requested a private meeting with Bevin, without the knowledge of the other members of the Transjordanian delegation, with the exception of Glubb whose services were needed as an interpreter. On the British side too the utmost secrecy was preserved and even the high commissioner for Palestine was not informed about this meeting.

Bevin received Abul Huda and Glubb on February 7 in his splendid room in the Foreign Office where many borders had been drawn and redrawn in the imperial past with little or no reference to the wishes of the local inhabitants. Glubb, who translated the statement of the prime minister sentence by sentence, later disclosed the content of this highly confidential interview in his book, *A Soldier with the Arabs*.

According to Glubb's account, Tawfiq Pasha began by observing that while the Jews had prepared a government, a police force, and an army to assume power upon termination of the mandate, the Palestinian Arabs had made no preparations to govern themselves, nor did they have the means of creating an army. If the situation was left as it was, Tawfiq Pasha forecast that one of two things would happen. One possibility was that the Jews would ignore the UN partition plan and seize the whole of Palestine up to the River Jordan. The other possibility was that the mufti would return and try to make himself ruler of Arab Palestine. Neither of these alternatives would suit either Transjordan or Britain, said Tawfiq Pasha, emphasizing that the mufti, who had spent the war with Hitler in Berlin, was the irreconcilable enemy of both countries.

During recent weeks, King Abdullah and his government had received, and were continuing to receive, many petitions from Palestine Arab notables begging for the protection of the Arab Legion after the withdrawal of the British forces. The Transjordanian government accordingly proposed to send the Arab Legion across the Jordan when the mandate ended and to occupy that part of Palestine awarded to the Arabs which was contiguous with the frontier of Transjordan. When Glubb finished translating thus far, Bevin interrupted by saying: 'It seems the obvious thing to do.' Glubb reminded Tawfiq Pasha, speaking in Arabic, that the Arab Legion could not occupy the Gaza area or Upper Galilee, which had also been allotted to the Arabs. Tawfiq Pasha made the appropriate qualification and Glubb translated it into English. 'It seems the obvious thing to do,' repeated Bevin, 'but do not go and invade the areas allotted to the Jews.' 'We would not have the forces to do so, even if we so desired,' replied the

prime minister. To conclude the interview he pointed out that the treaty between their two countries called on the contracting parties to consult one another whenever a critical situation threatened to arise, and it was this provision that had prompted his call. Bevin thanked Tawfiq Pasha for his frank exposition of the position of Transjordan and expressed his agreement with the plans put forward. The two visitors rose, shook hands cordially, and took their leave.

Abul Huda was reassured by Bevin's response to his presentation of the secret Transjordanian plan of action. He returned home with a definite sense that his mission had been accomplished. Bevin, too, had every reason to be pleased with the way the meeting went. Before the meeting he had been advised by Kirkbride that the Transjordanians were honest in their plan to restrict their occupation in Palestine to the Arab zone and to avoid a clash between the Arab Legion and the Jewish forces. Now he had that intention confirmed by the Transjordan prime minister himself.

Bevin's meeting with Abul Huda was a major turning-point in Britain's policy towards the Middle East. Up to this point Britain had declined to enforce the UN partition plan but had failed to develop a clear strategy for defending her position in the area following the end of the mandate. There was a pro-Hashemite school which advocated an enlarged Transjordan as the principal bulwark of British power and influence in the Middle East. But there was also opposition to this line of argument inside the Foreign Office, on the grounds that siding with Abdullah against the rest of the Arab countries could lead to the destruction of the Arab League. Abul Huda helped to persuade Bevin that the Transjordanians could be relied upon to act discreetly and moderately and that the proposed course of action would be to Britain's advantage. The keystone of British policy swung into place. From this point on Britain worked in close co-operation with Abdullah to secure the expansion of his kingdom over most of Arab Palestine.

In effect, Britain now became an accomplice in an attempt to frustrate the UN partition plan and divide up Palestine instead

between Abdullah and the Jews. This was the solution urged by the Jews on Abdullah and the basis of his agreement with Golda Meir at Naharayim. It was not the first time that Britain had heard about Abdullah's contacts with the Jewish Agency, but it was the first time that the Transjordanian government had asked for British advice on this matter. Significantly, the only word of warning appended by Bevin to his acceptance of the Transjordanian plan was to refrain from invading the areas allotted to the Jews. Thus Bevin, who is portrayed by Zionist historians as irreconcilably opposed to the establishment of a Jewish state, appears, by February 1948, to be resigned to the inevitable emergence of a Jewish state but intent on frustrating the emergence of a Palestinian Arab state. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that he colluded directly with the Transjordanians and indirectly with the Jews to abort the birth of the Palestinian Arab state envisaged in the UN partition plan. In so many ways a worthy successor of Lord Curzon, the proletarian foreign secretary participated knowingly and willingly in the secret plan that led to the expansion of Abdullah's dungheap and left the Palestinians out in the cold.

Uneasy allies

Britain's discreet approval and backing for a Transjordanian bid in Palestine did nothing to allay Jewish anxieties. At their meeting in November 1947, King Abdullah and Golda Meir had agreed to meet again after the United Nations vote on partition, but owing to the disorders overtaking Palestine the follow-up meeting did not take place. For a number of weeks the Jewish Agency was able to maintain contact with the king through his emissaries, but with the gradual slide to chaos in the early months of 1948 this contact became more tenuous and intermittent. The most important of the king's emissaries during this period was his personal physician, Dr Shawkat Aziz as-Sati. Unlike some of the king's other aides, who had a personal axe to grind, Dr Sati enjoyed Abdullah's absolute confidence and was entrusted by him to carry out the most sensitive of missions. It was Dr Sati who was

usually sent to Jerusalem to convey the king's letters or verbal messages to Elias Sasson and Yaacov Shimoni. They for their part knew that 'the doctor' would not try to inject his personal views and preferences in the process of liaising between the two sides and that any money they handed to him would be faithfully delivered to the right destination.

To the Jewish officials it was rather disappointing that the king kept his relations with them on a strictly private and personal basis and that he did not see fit to involve his government in the talks or even to inform his ministers. Since the government was kept in the dark, there was always the danger that the prime minister and the king would pull in different directions. The king intimated that he could not rely on his ministers and that was why he used secret emissaries like Dr Sati. The Jewish officials could hardly insist that Abdullah involve his ministers but the fact that he did not was a constant source of concern for them.

Another factor which complicated the relationship was Jewish uncertainty about the extent of British knowledge and British support for the king's plan. Abdullah had hinted on a number of occasions that he preferred to reveal as little as possible about the nature of his relationship with the Jewish Agency to the British. The Jews had no direct link with the British government, and even if they had been told that Britain supported the division of Palestine between themselves and Transjordan they would not have believed it. Such was their mistrust of the abdicating mandatory power. So no tripartite agreement was possible and the triangle had only two arms, one linking Abdullah to Britain and the other to the Jewish Agency.

The Jewish Agency pressed Abdullah for a precise and written agreement. Its officials were very anxious to obtain a commitment in writing, a secret but written agreement, specifying the respective undertakings of the two sides. Abdullah, however, refused to be nailed down. He wanted the agreement to remain vague. It suited his temperament and it suited his political culture. The British had once tried to obtain his father's signature to a text but the Hashemites did not like precise or written agreements. Arab gentlemen keep such matters vague. Abdullah once sent a

message to say that if there is trust, written commitments are unnecessary and if there is no trust, even written commitments would be of no avail. Yet, Yaacov Shimoni, who is in a very good position to judge, emphatically maintains that despite Abdullah's evasions, the understanding with him was

entirely clear in its general spirit. We would agree to the conquest of the Arab part of Palestine by Abdullah. We would not stand in his way. We would not help him, would not seize it and hand it over to him. He would have to take it by his own means and strategems but we would not disturb him. He, for his part, would not prevent us from establishing the state of Israel, from dividing the country, taking our share and establishing a state in it. Now his vagueness, his ambiguity, consisted of declining to write anything, to draft anything which would bind him. To this he did not agree. But to the end, until the last minute, and if I am not mistaken even during his last talk with Golda [Meir] in May 1948, he always said again and again: 'perhaps you would settle for less than complete independence and statehood, after all; under my sovereignty or within a common framework with me you would receive full autonomy or a Jewish canton, not a totally separate one but under the Hashemite crown.' This he did try to raise every now and again and, of course, always met with a blank wall. We told him we were talking about complete, full and total independence and are not prepared to discuss anything else. And to this he seemed resigned but without ever saying: 'OK, an independent state.' He did not say that, he did not commit himself, he was not precise. But such was the spirit of the agreement and it was totally unambiguous.

Incidentally, the agreement included a provision that if Abdullah succeeded in capturing Syria, and realized his dream of Greater Syria—something we did not think he had the power to do—we would not disturb him. We did not believe either in the strength of his faction in Syria. But the agreement included a provision that if he does accomplish it, we would not stand in his way. But regarding the Arab part of Palestine, we did think it was serious and that he had every chance of taking it, all the more so since the Arabs of Palestine, with their official leadership, did not want to establish a state at all. That meant that we were not interfering with anybody. It was they who refused. Had they accepted a state, we might not have entered into the conspiracy. I do not know. But the fact was that they refused, so there was a complete power vacuum here and we agreed that he will go in and take the Arab part,

provided he consented to the establishment of our state and to a joint declaration that there will be peaceful relations between us and him after the dust settles. That was the spirit of the agreement. A text did not exist.

When the rumours began to spread that the Transjordanian government had decided to join the other Arab states in an invasion of Palestine designed to seize the whole country, Golda Meir sent a message to Abdullah asking whether his original promise to her still held. By her own account, the reply from Amman was prompt and positive. King Abdullah was astonished and hurt by her question. He asked her to remember three things: that he was a bedouin and therefore a man of honour; that he was a king and therefore doubly an honourable man; and finally, that he would never break a promise made to a woman. So there could not possibly be any justification for her concern.

This triple reassurance, bedouin–royal–chivalrous, was not enough to calm Golda Meir's intensely suspicious mind, and her fears of betrayal fed on her ignorance of the intricacies of inter-Arab politics. Her doubts concerning Abdullah's reliability as a partner, though not her ignorance of the regional context in which he had to manœuvre, were shared by the man who led the struggle for a Jewish state, David Ben-Gurion. Ben-Gurion encouraged both Sharett and Mrs Meir to cultivate the link with Transjordan while he himself remained sceptical about the viability of this link. A pessimist by nature, Ben-Gurion not only prepared for the worst but also expected the worst to happen. He was totally unshakeable in his belief that the Arab League would launch an all-out invasion of Palestine and was ever alert to the possibility that despite all Abdullah's private protestations of friendship he would ultimately throw in his lot with the rest of the Arab states. Deeply distrustful of British intentions, he saw the Arab Legion as an instrument of British power and worried that the regime in Amman was the stalking horse for British imperialism.

Ben-Gurion was not terribly interested in the question of whether or not Abdullah genuinely wanted to live with the Jews in everlasting peace. He was much more concerned with the security

problem, and his immediate purpose was to try and neutralize the Arab Legion. His entire strategy was governed by the twin imperatives of establishing a Jewish state and then defending it against what he saw as an inevitable Arab military onslaught aimed at destroying it at birth. The United Nations resolution of November 1947 had provided a charter of legitimacy for the establishment of a Jewish state but it did not afford this state any protection against attack by her neighbours. Ben-Gurion repeatedly warned his colleagues that the impending military confrontation would be not against gangs on the pattern of the 1936–9 Arab Rebellion but against the regular armies of the Arab states. A well-trained and well-equipped regular army would therefore be needed to repel the attack. At that time the Jewish community in Palestine was weak in military terms, compared to the combined forces of the other side. Everything had to be tried, therefore, to reduce the strength of the opposing camp, and one way of achieving that was by splitting it. Ben-Gurion knew that the Arab Legion was the best and most dangerous of the regular armies surrounding Palestine, and that was why he was so keenly interested in breaking this link in the hostile chain. He also knew that King Abdullah was undecided on whether to join hands with the other Arab rulers, and therefore fully supported the efforts to persuade him not to go to war.

On 9 December 1947, Ben-Gurion cabled Sharett that the situation was becoming grave, that the mufti held complete sway over all the Palestine Arabs, and that opposition to the Husaynis was practically non-existent. The king was also completely isolated, and could not be relied upon. But the following day, Dr Sati came to meet Elias Sasson and Yaacov Shimoni with a reassuring report from the Hashemite monarch. The king, said Sati, was ready for a further meeting and was waiting for a visit. He had sent a cable to the mufti urging restraint and had also contacted Azzam Pasha and demanded that he issue an order to stop the disturbances in Palestine. To the Military Committee set up by the Arab League, Transjordan declined to appoint a representative because representation would have implied recognition of the League's authority to deploy Transjordan's forces. And

Abdullah was not worried that Transjordan's absence would be exploited to intrigue against her. Ben-Gurion's next report to Sharett was decidedly more optimistic: 'The king persists in his rebellion—he is helping neither the mufti nor the League; whether he will stand firm to the end is not clear to me, but there is a chance.'

A week later, Dr Sati paid another visit to Sasson and Shimoni. The king was in an elated mood and had asked him to tell them that the League was not a League and its decisions were worthless. In response to a previous letter by Sasson about the Arab Legion, the king suggested that the Jewish press should loudly demand the transfer of the Legion to the Arab part of Palestine. Sasson now advised that the king should tell the British that the Syrians were buying arms and that this was directed against him, Britain's ally. The doctor promised to relay this advice. At this point Sasson made the boldest suggestion for a co-ordinated strategy: the Jews would deliver a fresh blow, this would supply an excuse for intervention by Abdullah, the king would come to the aid of the Arab part and then the Jews would help him with money.

The outbreak of clashes between bedouins and Jews around Gaza alerted Ben-Gurion to the danger that the whole Negev could slip out of Israel's grasp. To reassert Israeli influence there, he appointed a special committee which included Ezra Danin. Elias Sasson was asked to appeal to King Abdullah to use his influence with the population of Gaza and with the bedouin tribal chiefs, who were considered his supporters, in order to quell the disorders. There was also a plan to organize a 'peace gang' under one chief, with moral backing from Abdullah and financial backing from the Negev committee, to beat up and banish the troublemakers. Danin was promised a budget of £P50,000 from which he thought a handsome portion could be diverted in Abdullah's direction. Sasson expertly observed that if £P10,000–15,000 could be set aside for Abdullah, it would then become possible to ask him to take some concrete steps to calm down the Negev.

A vitally important meeting was held under Ben-Gurion's chairmanship during the first and second days of January, 1948.

The chiefs of staff of the Haganah and the Jewish Agency's Arabists were invited to participate in a comprehensive review of the situation. Many of the questions which were to dominate Israeli strategic thinking in the years to come were brought up in the discussion. Prominent among them were the questions of passive versus active defence, the role of settlements in the Yishuv's defence plans, the pros and cons of self-restraint as opposed to a policy of deliberate escalation of the conflict, and the perennial question of how and on what scale to retaliate against Arab provocations.

Sasson advocated a selective but hard-hitting policy of military reprisals against the followers of the mufti. But he also insisted on the need to combine the use of force with political flexibility—indeed, to subordinate all military and tactical considerations to a clearly articulated political programme of action. 'We must not place our trust in force alone', he warned his colleagues. 'We have to find a way to an understanding with the Arabs.' On the subject of Abdullah, which featured prominently in the discussions, Sasson reported the disturbing news suggesting that the king might have decided to join the Arab coalition and calling for a reversal of previous assumptions.

Ezra Danin, who was charged with monitoring all the information and contacts with the Palestine Arabs, disputed Sasson's analysis and proposals. His programme was to support the opposition, localize the trouble, reach agreement with as many villages as possible to prevent incidents, conserve Jewish force and resources, and aim to reach May 15 with as few casualties as possible. In other words, Danin's advice was to contain rather than purposefully escalate the developing military conflict.

Ben-Gurion valued Danin as a good expert on the local Arab scene but he tended to side with Sasson. To help weld the opposition into a cohesive and organized force against the mufti, as Danin suggested, carried the risk that this force would one day rise up against its creator. Moreover, Danin's programme, pushed to its logical conclusion, was likely to lead to partition between the Jewish and Palestinian communities, whereas Ben-Gurion saw

the Arab part as the prize with which to tempt Abdullah to break ranks with the Arab League. These considerations as well as considerations of timing influenced Ben-Gurion to seize the initiative and embark on a policy of 'aggressive defence' accompanied by economic subversion and psychological warfare. The escalation of violence would give Abdullah the pretext for intervention. The latest news, however, made Ben-Gurion wonder whether Abdullah's previous pro-Jewish orientation or his new pan-Arab orientation would prevail in the end. So he adopted whole-heartedly the first part of Sasson's programme, neglecting the other half which called for political flexibility.

Moshe Sharett was briefed about these discussions upon his return from New York. He took the view that if Abdullah looked like gaining control over the Arab part of Palestine either directly or through a stooge who would facilitate its annexation to Transjordan, they would be justified in making serious efforts to help him financially. Sharett's great worry was that the king was not to be trusted. That was why they had to take great care and remain vigilant. If they could be certain that there was a good chance that he would keep his promises—seizure and pacification of the Arab part and support for the establishment of the Jewish state—Sharett believed they could win the support of the Russians and the Americans for him. The Russians would be told that since he had been abandoned by Britain and no longer served Britain's interests and since they professed an interest in the establishment of a Jewish state, they should actively support Abdullah, or at least not oppose him. The Americans were definitely interested in the establishment of the Jewish state and if they could be convinced that the king would help to counter the prevalent extremism and stop the bloodshed, they would support him. As far as material assistance was concerned, Sharett doubted whether they would be able to lend Abdullah some of their own money to maintain the Legion during the period of transition. Nevertheless, he wanted Abdullah to be told that he did not visit him 'for fear of the evil eye which would harm him and malign him in his difficult present situation', and that the Jews were going to borrow money for themselves and that from

whatever they obtain they would set aside a portion for him and his army.

The task of composing the message to King Abdullah fell to Elias Sasson and he discharged it with the aureate but cunning and opaque style which flowed so naturally from the political culture of the Middle East. The letter, dated January 11, mildly reprimanded Abdullah for not doing anything to put an end to the bloody riots in Palestine. It reminded him of his previous agreement concerning a peaceful solution to the problem of Palestine. It explained at great length and in lurid detail the intrigues of the Arab politicians to push him into the boiling cauldron in the cynical expectation that Transjordanians and Jews would exhaust one another in fighting and thereby rid the Arab League of both at little cost to itself. It insinuated that influential Syrian and Saudi politicians were behind the mufti's plot to establish a Palestinian Arab state which would frustrate by violence and terror any attempt to attach the Arab part to Transjordan. And it proclaimed the determination of the Jews to establish their own state and defend their independence with all their might. After the threats and the warnings, Sasson dangled the carrot in front of Abdullah's nose. 'My big brother', he said, meaning Sharett, has recently visited the country and among the questions discussed with him were:

(*a*) Our mutual agreement and its swift implementation.
(*b*) The strengthening of your international position and its prospects.
(*c*) The granting to you of an international credit and the ways to obtain it.
(*d*) Improving the relations between yourselves and the Americans and Russia and how to achieve it.
(e) Your intervention in the Arab part of Palestine and its capture, without protest from the Security Council.

Pervading the entire letter was the assumption that the interests of the two sides coincided, that a basic agreement was in existence to assist one another by indirect means, and that it was highly

desirable to continue to shroud this co-operation in a veil of secrecy. The letter deliberately inflated Jewish influence over international diplomacy and finance in order to raise the recipient's expectations.

In conclusion, the letter observed that all these matters were of great importance and called for urgent talks between the Jews and Abdullah, either directly or through an emissary.

One go-between came from Amman, probably before the letter reached its destination: Omar Dajani. He informed Sasson that Abdullah was under strong pressure from British and Arab statesmen to occupy the whole of Palestine and award the Jews autonomy in the Tel Aviv–Atlit area, a small enclave along the coast, and that he had been promised several million pounds by Arab politicians for this purpose. Abdullah had told Dajani about his promises to the Jews and said that he was willing to keep them on condition that they get him American and international support and agree to minor border adjustments to enable him to show that he had achieved something for the Arabs, and had asked Dajani to return immediately to the United States to work for him in concert with the Jewish representatives there. He had even promised Dajani written authorization to appear officially on his behalf and on behalf of his government.

Dajani, codenamed 'the orphan', may or may not have been an orphan in the literal sense, but he certainly had two exacting employers to please. This did not make him a double agent in the conventional sense of the term since each employer knew and approved of his association with the other. It did however complicate the problem of his remuneration. Abdullah valued Dajani for his resourcefulness and vigour and for the skilful manner in which he promoted his cause in America. But with the meagre resources at his disposal, Abdullah could not afford to keep Dajani in the style to which he was becoming accustomed. It suited him, therefore, to have Dajani on the Jewish Agency's payroll even though such an arrangement was bound to cast some doubt about his primary focus of loyalty. The irregularity of this arrangement in terms of conventional diplomatic practice and

protocol does not appear to have caused Abdullah any loss of sleep. For the Jewish Agency it was a major coup to secure the services of an agent with such excellent Transjordanian, Arab, and international contacts. To them he was useful not just for the light he shed on the darker corners of inter-Arab diplomacy but also for his skill and ingenuity as a political operator. The Jewish delegation at Lake Success was particularly anxious to secure his services during the Security Council deliberations and 'the orphan' was not a man to undersell himself. He was paid $2,000 plus $300 travel expenses and $500 London expenses. And he was promised a monthly salary of $2,000 for his stay in New York in the coming year.

In contrast to Dr Sati, who owed his undivided allegiance to Abdullah, Dajani had to please two masters and therefore had a personal stake in fostering better relations between them. On January 19, he returned from a second visit to Abdullah and reported to Sasson that the king complained that he had been misunderstood and wrongly accused of supporting the Arab League. His intention remained firm not to allow the Legion to attack Jews and not to intervene at all before the departure of the British. The king and his prime minister had told Dajani that they expected Britain to disclose her real attitude during the London talks to amend the 1946 treaty. The king's emissaries to London would take the line that he would accept partition, but a partition that would enable him to appear as an Arab nationalist and that would involve frontier changes. The king also promised to oppose with all his force the establishment of an Arab government or administration headed by the Husaynis.

Abdullah wanted an international loan to raise a militia in 'his part of Palestine', and had been told that the Jews would support it. He had also been promised that the Jews would help him get a loan to develop his whole country, and that rather than pay a subsidy to the Arab state envisaged in the partition plan they would assist him themselves with the money of the Jewish state. The king, reported Dajani, now wanted Jewish help to achieve these objectives. Sasson advised Ben-Gurion that Abdullah was sincere and that the promises should be kept. The irony involved

in the offer of Jewish finance for an Arab invasion of Palestine appears to have escaped Ben-Gurion's notice.

Sasson seized the opportunity to send a message to Amman to urge prompt Transjordanian intervention in Palestine to calm the mufti-instigated agitation. If this could not be done directly, he advised intervention by appropriate guidance to the king's supporters and followers there. Sasson also claimed that the Transjordanians ruled the Hebron area and that the recent clashes between Arabs and Jews in Hebron would not have occurred had preventive action been taken.

A week later, 'the good doctor' resumed his shuttle between Amman and Jerusalem with a specific reply to Sasson's complaint. The king had invited the Hebron notables for talks and was also sending emissaries to the bedouins of the Negev. He asked the Jews to exercise self-restraint. He himself was unable to intervene before renegotiating the treaty with Britain and before learning Britain's real intentions concerning Palestine. He asked Sharett to press for an international force and the early arrival of the United Nations Commission in order to frustrate the mufti's schemes and deter the Arab states. He also asked Sharett to look into the question of an international loan for Transjordan. In addition, he suggested a Jewish protest at the United Nations regarding Syrian and Iraqi volunteers passing through Transjordan on the way to Palestine without his consent; this, he said, was a Syrian intrigue designed to bring him into conflict with the United Nations. For his part, Abdullah intended to invite Fawzi al-Qawukji, who commanded the volunteers from Syria, to win him over and persuade him to direct his activities primarily against the Husayni irregulars. Abdullah expressed the hope that Sharett and Golda Meir, who had joined Omar Dajani in New York, would assist him and treat him as his loyal representative. Finally, Abdullah reiterated his request to the Jewish leaders to trust him fully, to raise their financial support, and to consider the possibility of border modifications.

Since Abdullah's suggestion of frontier revision in his favour met with stubborn opposition from the Jews, Dajani advanced the idea that the international zone of Jerusalem should be

occupied by the Jews and the Arabs. The Jewish domain would be limited to the residential quarters they already occupied; the remainder of the city and all the countryside included in the international enclave would be added to the Arab state. This would increase both the area and population of the Arab state and establish Abdullah as the faithful saviour of Palestine. Dajani was told that there was no point in propagating this idea because it would turn the whole Christian world against Abdullah and only add strength to his enemies. He was also told to stick to the terms of reference which had been agreed in Jerusalem and Amman before his departure for America. He was to negotiate with the State Department for recognition of Transjordan; was to endeavour to raise an international loan for Transjordan; and was to serve as Transjordan's unofficial representative at the United Nations with the aim of securing his country's admission to that organization.

Upsetting the United Nations scheme for Jerusalem by dividing the city with the Jews would have been a very poor recommendation for Transjordan's membership. Abdullah was unlikely therefore to contemplate such a course at that particular time despite the unquestionable attraction of becoming the protector of the Holy Places. The British had also cautioned him that he could not count on their diplomatic support if he incurred the wrath of the Security Council by taking unilateral action. Having worked so hard to get British acquiescence in his limited plan of intervention in Palestine, Abdullah was not about to forfeit it by going beyond the limits set by Bevin at his private meeting with Abul Huda in early February. On the other hand Abdullah could not openly declare that his policy was to occupy only the Arab part because then he would be denounced in nationalist Arab circles for accepting partition. To forestall such accusations, the king and his prime minister played a complicated double-game. They told the Arabs that they were going to try to occupy the whole of Palestine, fully aware that with the means at their disposal they would be unable to achieve more than the occupation of the Arab areas.

A most authoritative account of Abdullah's military plans

was given by Glubb Pasha on January 30 to Maj.-Gen. C. D. Packard, the director of Military Intelligence at the War Office. Since Glubb had arrived in London as a member of the high-level delegation from Amman, this conversation was 'off the record' and in this respect quite typical of the back-stairs methods by which Glubb continued to serve the British government. Glubb made it clear that there was no intention to move before May 15. He was also at pains to stress that King Abdullah would not march over the Jewish frontier. According to Glubb, the main objectives of the invading force would be Beersheba, Hebron, Ramallah, Nablus, and Jenin, with forward elements in Tulkarem and the area just south of Lydda. He thought it unlikely that the king would make any attempt on Gaza, which was also allocated to the Arab state, because he had no wish to come into conflict with the Jews. 'Jerusalem would of course be inviolate.'

The change that had taken place in the British position on Palestine following Glubb and Abul Huda's visit to London was not detected by the Jewish side. Reliable information about Britain was in very short supply to the otherwise well-informed intelligence service of the Yishuv. Reuven Shiloah (Zaslani) persistently misunderstood and misrepresented British intentions to the Jewish policymakers during this period. The root of the problem was that he based his estimates on rumours regarding the British administration in Palestine and had no access to the highest levels in London where policy was determined. The result was a great deal of unjustified suspicion of the British role in the interim period from November 1947 to May 1948—suspicions which led to underestimating the possibility of moving forward with Abdullah with tacit British agreement.

In early February, Shiloah went to London to find out whether there was, as he suspected, a British plot against the Yishuv. Failing to catch the slightest whiff of the real plot that had just been hatched by Bevin and Abul Huda, Shiloah initially reported that the British were plotting to eliminate both the mufti and Abdullah from the Palestine settlement and to base it on the moderate Palestinian Musa Alami and the Arab League. On the

Jews the British were said to be preparing to impose ultimately a version of the Morrison–Grady plan. On his return Shiloah asserted categorically that the Abdullah solution had been set aside and that Britain's new plan was to rely on Syria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. It is difficult to conceive of a more erroneous or a more misleading estimate of British intentions, yet this was the basis on which Zionist policy was to proceed in the coming months.

Neutralizing the Arab Liberation Army

The presence of irregular Arab forces in Palestine before the termination of the mandate was as unwelcome to the Transjordanian government as it was to the British. But it proved impossible for Transjordan, already suspected by the other Arab states of having ulterior motives, to persist in its original policy of denying volunteers from Syria passage across its territory. Although in theory the irregular Arab forces were directed by a committee of the Arab League in which all the member states participated, in practice the control was in the hands of the Syrian government, and the Transjordanian authorities had no say in the matter.

The Arab Liberation Army was raised and financed by the Arab League in pursuit of its policy of preventing the establishment of a Jewish state without the official intervention of the regular Arab armies. It was commanded by the Syrian adventurer Fawzi al-Qawukji. Qawukji had had a chequered career in the course of which he had served in the Ottoman army, with the French against Faisal's short-lived kingdom in Damascus, as a military adviser to Ibn-Saud, and as a regular officer in the Iraqi army. During the Arab Rebellion in Palestine in 1936–9, Qawukji had acquired a reputation as a successful guerrilla leader, but he owed this reputation more to his skill in manipulating the Arab press than in planning military operations. After being ignominiously banished from Palestine by the British he went to Iraq where he played a minor role in staging Rashid Ali al-Kilani's abortive pro-Axis rebellion. Having suffered a face wound when

his car was machine-gunned from a British aircraft, which was for some reason taken as a mark of heroism rather than of incompetence or bad luck, he sat out the rest of the war in Germany and emerged from obscurity only at the end of 1947 with his appointment to command the Arab Liberation Army. The Arab politicians who appointed Qawukji valued him more as a known enemy of and therefore potential counter-weight to the mufti than as the most promising military leader available to lead the fight against the Jews.

The first companies of the Arab Liberation Army, recruited and trained in Syria, reached Palestine via Transjordan in January 1948. Meeting no challenge from the British forces who were still responsible for law and order in Palestine, they established themselves in the Nablus–Jenin–Tulkarem triangle. Other companies followed at intervals, swelling its ranks from 2–3,000 in January to 4–5,000 in March and 6–8,000 in April. In mid-February, without proper preparations but with a great deal of theatrical fanfare, Qawukji ordered his forces to attack Kibbutz Tirat Zvi in the Jordan Valley. Instead of the victory intended to impress the Palestinian Arab population, Qawukji's 1st Yarmuk Battalion retreated in disarray, leaving behind 60 dead and a large portion of its equipment.

Qawukji himself did not reach Palestine until early March, travelling by way of Amman. Earlier, when he had been stopped at the Syrian–Transjordanian border in January, he had declined the offer to go and see King Abdullah for fear that both of them would be suspected of plotting against the Arab League or against President Shukri al-Quwatli of Syria, but now, with Quwatli's subsequent turn against the mufti, his inhibitions about a meeting with Abdullah were reduced. In his political orientation Qawukji had always been anti-Husayni. He now apparently believed that Palestine should be joined to Transjordan and that the Jews should be forced to accept an autonomous but clearly subordinate position within this large Arab kingdom. Convinced that the mufti's lieutenants cared only about themselves and were taking the Arabs of Palestine along a road to disaster, he was ill-disposed from the start to any co-operation with them.

So by the time Qawukji was received by King Abdullah on March 5, there were three main Arab forces jockeying for position in Palestine. They were the mufti's paramilitary force, the Arab Liberation Army, and the seven infantry companies of the Arab Legion stationed in Palestine to protect British military installations. Politically, these three separate forces were at loggerheads and if at any time two of the forces were to combine, the third would be of little value. Qawukji was invited to Amman to preclude the possibility of a clash between the Arab Legion and the Arab Liberation Army and to ensure that the mufti's force remained isolated.

Qawukji's anti-Husayni tendencies provided a basis for a dialogue not only with King Abdullah but also with the Jews. After the Arab Liberation Army had failed to capture Tirat Zvi, the Palestinian Arabs switched their tactics to cutting off Jewish lines of communication. In this they were much more successful and by the end of March they had ambushed a number of convoys and looked on the verge of winning the war for the roads. These military setbacks revived and reinforced Jewish doubts about Abdullah's reliability. 'Have you despaired of your king?' Ben-Gurion asked Sasson, half sarcastically, half accusingly, on March 8. 'No,' replied Sasson, 'but the King is impotent.'

On March 13 Sasson and Haim Berman, a colleague in the Political Department of the Jewish Agency, submitted the outlines of a new policy towards the Arab states. They noted that the Yishuv's political isolation was complete, that all contacts with the Arab states had been severed, and there was little chance of resuming them in their part of the world. Their proposal was to set up offices in France, Turkey, and India and seek direct links with the official representatives of the Arab states in these countries. Sasson and Berman also attached a plan to guide all future talks, a plan which involved an abrupt reversal of the Jewish Agency's previous political strategy. This plan envisaged the establishment of two republican-democratic states in Palestine, one Jewish and one Arab, in accordance with the UN partition resolution and its borders. The provisions for economic, political, and military co-operation between the two states went

much further than those laid down in the United Nations scheme.

As Yaacov Shimoni aptly observed in his written comments, 'The whole plan reeks of a change of our Arab political orientation, of despair of Abdullah.' Shimoni questioned the view that Abdullah had given up his special position and joined their enemies. If there was a *rapprochement* between Abdullah and the Arab League, Qawukji and the Syrians, it was possible, argued Shimoni, that it was the others who moved closer to Abdullah. 'If the contact between us and Meir [Abdullah was sometimes referred to by Jewish officials as 'Meir', an anagram of his title, emir] has been severed, the fault lies with us (and my hope is that we shall still be able to make amends, so that it will not become an unforgivable, historic guilt).' He saw the renewal of the contact with Abdullah, the development of the incipient contact with Qawukji's camp, and the potential link with the principal Arab representatives in America as much more realistic and promising than fresh diplomatic efforts in remote capitals.

Sasson offered to go to Europe in person to renew the Jewish Agency's diplomatic links with various Arab quarters. On March 12 this proposal was considered at a meeting of the Political Department and no objections were raised. Golda Meir, however, wanted to know whether the proposed departure of Elias Sasson and Ezra Danin implied that all the work they had invested in Abdullah was being written off as a failure. Danin denied that there was any implication of this sort and Zeev Sharef insisted that 'no theory can justify the cancellation of the link with Meir. Everything must be done in order to preserve it'. Accordingly, Golda Meir vetoed the suggestion that Yehoshua Palmon should accompany Sasson on his trip abroad; in the event of their being able to renew the contact with 'Meir', she concluded, he would be needed at home.

In the meantime, Palmon's linguistic and diplomatic talents were needed for the task of initiating a dialogue with Qawukji. Palmon was one of the Haganah's ablest intelligence officers; he had spent the Second World War as a secret agent in Syria and was later to become Ben-Gurion's adviser on Arab affairs. From following closely factional Arab politics, Palmon was aware of

the bitter grudge which Qawukji bore the mufti. Back in 1947 Palmon had found wartime German documents bearing on this feud and he had put them in Qawukji's direction. These documents confirmed Qawukji's suspicion that it was the mufti who had instigated his arrest and incarceration by the German authorities. Qawukji expressed a desire to meet Palmon but on being appointed to command the Arab Liberation Army he dropped the idea. From the officers who arrived in Palestine before their chief, however, Palmon learnt that he was not hell-bent on fighting the Jews. He realized that such a war would be neither short nor easy and he was said to be open to suggestions for averting it.

Palmon informed Ben-Gurion that a meeting with Qawukji could be arranged and that he wanted to try and persuade him to keep out of the fight between the Haganah and the mufti's followers. Ben-Gurion readily approved the idea provided no promises were made to limit their own freedom of action to retaliate against any armed gangs. Palmon went to see Qawukji at the latter's headquarters in the village of Nur Shams on April 1. After a great deal of beating about the bush, Palmon got down to the real business of the meeting, which was to turn inter-Arab rivalries to his side's advantage. A solution could have been found to the problems of Palestine, he said, had it not been for the mufti. Qawukji launched into a diatribe against the mufti's wicked ambitions, violent methods, and selfish lieutenants. When Palmon mentioned Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni, the mufti's cousin who commanded the Husayni forces in the Jerusalem area, and Hassan Salameh, who had his headquarters in Ramleh, Qawukji interjected that they could not count on any help from him and, indeed, he hoped the Jews would teach them a good lesson. Palmon then suggested that the Jews and the Arab Liberation Army should refrain from attacking each other and plan instead to negotiate following the departure of the British. Qawukji agreed but explained frankly that he would have to score one military victory against the Jews in order to shake his reputation clean of the mud of Tirat Zvi. Palmon would not promise to hand him a victory on a silver plate. If we are attacked, he said, we will have to fight back. Nevertheless, he went away with a clear

impression that Qawukji would remain neutral in the event of a Jewish attack on the mufti's forces in Palestine.

The promised attack took place on April 4 against Kibbutz Mishmar-Haemek, on the Jenin–Haifa road, under Qawukji's personal direction. It did little to rebuild his reputation, however, as despite the heavy odds in their favour his forces suffered another humiliating defeat. The flamboyant Qawukji proved himself little short of a menace to his own side.

The tide was now beginning to turn in favour of the Jews. Their military weakness in March had adverse repercussions on their international standing. The United States withdrew its support for partition and proposed instead a UN trusteeship which was vehemently rejected by the Jewish Agency because it involved a delay in the creation of a Jewish state. An advance party of the United Nations Palestine Commission was sent to the country but the British authorities and the Arabs refused to co-operate with it. The Jewish leaders realized that only military success would reverse the tide in their favour and that Jerusalem would be of overriding importance in the on-going struggle. On April 1, Operation Nachshon was launched to open the road to Jerusalem. First, Hassan Salameh's headquarters in Ramleh was blown up. Although an Arab Liberation Army contingent with heavy guns was present in the neighbourhood it did not go to the rescue. Qawukji kept his word to Palmon. Next was the battle for the Kastel in which Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni was killed. Shortly before, Abd al-Qadir telephoned Qawukji to ask for an urgent supply of arms and ammunition to beat off the Jewish offensive. Thanks to the Arab League, Qawukji had large stocks of war material, but according to the Haganah listening post that monitored the call, he replied that he had none. This conversation showed once more that the earnestness of his promise to Palmon was matched only by his disloyalty to his Palestinian comrades-in-arms. Abd al-Qadir was by far the ablest and most charismatic of the mufti's military commanders and his death led to the collapse of the Husayni forces in Palestine.

Encouraged by the success of Operation Nachshon, the Haganah pressed on with the highly ambitious 'Plan D'. Its aim

was to secure all the areas allocated to the Jewish state under the UN partition resolution, as well as Jewish settlements outside these areas and corridors leading to them, so as to provide a solid and continuous territorial basis for Jewish sovereignty. The novelty and audacity of the plan lay in the orders to capture Arab villages and cities, something the Haganah had never attempted before.

Once the tide had turned in their favour, the Jews no longer felt constrained to remain within the narrow and awkward boundaries laid down for them by the UN cartographers—after all, the Arab Higher Committee had rejected the 1947 partition resolution lock, stock, and barrel, and they were thus hardly in a position to complain if the Jews chose to disregard selected boundary provisions. The only practical constraint on Jewish expansion stemmed from their understanding with Abdullah to let him take the Arab part as defined by that resolution. Once Abdullah was thought to be wavering in his commitment to the agreement, they too began to consider themselves free of the reciprocal obligation to him. Yaacov Shimoni was undoubtedly right in holding that it was they themselves who were responsible for the loosening of the contact with Abdullah, but Shimoni's capacity for self-criticism was not generally shared. The men at the top mostly believed that it was Abdullah who was backsliding, and their suspicions of him were only reinforced by his repeated attempts to reopen the questions of borders and autonomy. Though they had not given up hope that Abdullah would stand by his original promise, they were assailed by mounting doubts about his reliability and fears of betrayal. The unwritten agreement between the Zionist movement and the ruler of Transjordan, though just a few months old, was showing signs of breaking up under the combined strain of external pressures and mutual suspicion.

6

The Tortuous Road to War

Deir Yassin

On April 5 Elias Sasson wrote to Dr Sati to say that he had been waiting for eight weeks for a visit or a message from him and that the silence from Transjordan was all the more puzzling in view of the gravity of recent developments. Sasson wanted to know why the Transjordanians opened their gates to permit guests to enter Palestine in contravention of their promise to the Jews. He had also heard that Transjordan had entered into agreements with its neighbours which contradicted the agreement with the Jews and he wanted to know whether this was indeed the case. With a hint that the Jews still intended to carry out their part of the agreement, Sasson called for an urgent meeting to exchange views on the deteriorating situation.

At a meeting of the Arab Section of the Political Department held three days later, Sasson reported that contact with Abdullah was virtually non-existent. Sasson was in favour of efforts to continue the dialogue with Abdullah but without expecting too much to come out of it. Abdullah, he explained, had only influence, not the authority to decide. In defiance of the Arab League, he had signed a new treaty with the British. After May 15, the British would hide behind him and his influence would consequently grow. A document from American intelligence indicated that the agreement between the Jews and King Abdullah was a wise move, spoilt only by the publicity given to it.

Publicity of a totally different order was given to the atrocity of Deir Yassin committed by Jewish dissidents while Operation Nachshon was in full swing. Deir Yassin was a small Arab village lying along the western approach to Jerusalem. It had concluded a non-aggression pact with the Haganah and scrupulously observed it. But on April 9, a contingent of Irgun and Stern Gang

fighters, without the agreement of the Haganah, fell upon the village with the purported intention of forcing its inhabitants to flee. When the inhabitants offered resistance, the attackers opened fire indiscriminately and savagely massacred some 245 men, women, and children. Some of the villagers were driven in a lorry through the streets of Jerusalem in a 'victory parade' before they were taken back to the village and shot against the wall. News of the massacre spread like a whirlwind through the land, striking terror into Arab hearts. More than any other single event, it was responsible for breaking the spirit of the civilian population and setting in motion the mass exodus of Arabs from Palestine.

The spokesmen of the Jewish Agency and the Haganah immediately repudiated responsibility for the massacre. With the approval, and possibly on the initiative, of Ben-Gurion, the Jewish Agency also sent a telegram in Arabic to King Abdullah disclaiming responsibility and denouncing the Irgun for having committed this 'brutal and barbaric deed'. The message ended with an appeal to all concerned to ensure that the Palestine dispute is conducted in accordance with the laws of war of civilized nations, if it could not be averted and stopped altogether. No such message was addressed to the other Arab leaders. Ben-Gurion's biographer gives three reasons for this unusual step. First and foremost, there was the secret understanding with Abdullah. Ben-Gurion feared that the Deir Yassin atrocity would inflame Arab fear and hatred of the Jews and intensify the pressure on Abdullah to throw the Arab Legion into the battle. A second reason was Ben-Gurion's fear that the Deir Yassin incident would plunge the Arab and Jewish communities in Palestine into total war with mass extermination and uncontrollable bloodshed. The third reason was connected with the diplomatic campaign at the United Nations. The flight of the Palestinian Arabs served the military needs of the Yishuv but endangered its international position. A major contention of official Zionist propaganda was that peaceful relations between Arabs and Jews were possible, and Ben-Gurion himself repeatedly declared a Jewish–Arab alliance to be one of the three main objectives of his policy. Any sign

of deterioration, any incident liable to plunge Palestine into a bloodbath, naturally encouraged the opponents of partition. Ben-Gurion therefore did all he could to prevent his thesis about Jewish–Arab peace from collapsing in front of the eyes of world public opinion. Deep in his heart, he rejoiced at the flight of the Arabs from the areas allotted to the Jewish state. His calls on them to stay and promises of a just and humane treatment resulted from tactical considerations not from his fundamental position. When the Arabs began to run away from Haifa *en masse*, Ben-Gurion stressed that 'it is not our function to see to the return of the Arabs'. And in a crucial political–military meeting he ordered 'the destruction of the Arab islands between the Jewish settlements'.

The head of the Royal Diwan acknowledged receipt of the message and remarked that the Jewish Agency could not divest itself of responsibility for anything that happened in Palestine. This non-committal message did not convey the full extent of Abdullah's outrage at the massacre of Deir Yassin. He wrote a letter to Kirkbride asking him to secure British assent to the posting of detachments of the Arab Legion in Palestine to defend Arab villages from Jewish aggression. When Kirkbride saw Abdullah the next day, he advised him against any message to the British government as it would be impossible for them to permit the regular army of an Arab state to function independently in Palestine before the end of the mandate. He also pointed out that there were so many Arab villages vulnerable to attack that the whole of the Arab Legion could not provide them with separate guards. After some further discussion they agreed that Glubb should explore with the officer commanding the British forces in Palestine the possibility of using the Arab Legion units under his command to improve security in the Arab areas. This formula satisfied the king even though it was unlikely to have any practical effect. One official in London remarked that Abdullah would be well advised to leave the strategy to his army commanders and concentrate on the propaganda side at which he was much more competent.

Arab League decisions and Jewish suspicions

The general collapse of Arab morale in Palestine and the military defeat of Qawukji's forces at Mishmar Haemek and of the Husayni forces in the Jerusalem area forced the Arab League to recognize that the volunteers on their own, even if reinforced in numbers and equipment, could not stand up to the Jewish forces and that regular armies might have to be used to check the Jewish military offensive. King Abdullah was quick to exploit this general Arab predicament and to volunteer the Arab Legion for the task of saving Palestine. Excessive Hashemite zeal to intervene in Palestine was liable to arouse the suspicion of the Arab states who were in no position to take part in the invasion. To forestall these suspicions, Abdullah made it clear that he himself was determined to go to the rescue when the British withdrew and that he would welcome the participation of the other Arab countries in this rescue operation provided they recognized that he was in overall charge.

The deteriorating situation in Palestine and the declared intention of one of its members to act formed the backdrop to the Arab League's meeting in Cairo on April 10. Syria and Lebanon presented a proposal for the formation of an all-Arab expeditionary force to capture Palestine after the end of the mandate. Fear that King Abdullah would follow up his unilateral action by an attempt to realize his Greater Syria plan was said to be the motive behind the Syrian–Lebanese proposal. But the Egyptians voiced strong opposition to the use of regular forces. An alternative proposal which originated with King Farouk asked the League to determine that the occupation would be temporary and that the Arabs of Palestine alone would have the right to choose the regime and government for their liberated country. The League's decision of April 12 stated that 'the entry of the Arab armies into Palestine should be seen as something temporary, without any intention of occupying or dividing it; after liberating Palestine, they will restore the country to its rightful owners to rule as they desire'. This formula proved readily acceptable to all the members because it entailed no commitment to send regular

armies and at the same time provided some sort of safeguard against a unilateral annexation of Palestine by Abdullah. To everyone's relief, Abdullah, against whom this decision was primarily directed, sent a telegraphic message to the Political Committee in Cairo offering to undertake the rescue of Palestine.

Abdel Rahman Azzam, the secretary-general of the League, wrote to King Abdullah on April 15 to accept his offer of using his army to liberate the besieged Arabs of Palestine and prevent more massacres from taking place. The prime minister of Syria and Hajj Amin al-Husayni were opposed to the acceptance of Abdullah's offer for fear that once the Legion occupied parts of Palestine, there would be no way of dislodging it. But Azzam felt that, since Fawzi al-Qawukji was unreliable and the Palestinians could not stand up to the Jews, there was no alternative to letting Transjordan do the job. His idea was to try to use the Arab Legion under the control of the League. King Abdullah made it clear, however, that all the Arab forces operating in Palestine would have to be placed under Transjordanian command and that the League would have to share the cost and the responsibility for intervention in Palestine.

The fall of Tiberias, Haifa, and Jaffa into Jewish hands in the second half of April and the flight of their Arab inhabitants from these mixed towns led to a growing volume of pressure from both inside and outside Palestine for the immediate intervention of the Arab Legion to contain the Jews. The flood of refugees reaching Transjordan put a great strain on the neutrality of the Legion and pushed it towards greater participation in the military and political affairs of Palestine. Without waiting for the end of the mandate, units of the Legion began to move across the River Jordan. They actively participated in the attack on a Jewish suburb of Jerusalem; gave aid and protection to Arab bands operating in different parts of the country; and provided patrols to accompany Arab traffic along the roads between Jerusalem and Hebron, Ramallah, and Jericho. They also undertook guard duties in Arab villages in different parts of the country to release Arab irregulars for combat missions and to prevent counter-attacks by Jewish forces.

These activities were also of some political significance because they brought the commander and officers of the Legion into contact with Arab notables in Palestine and fostered a growing body of support for Abdullah as the only effective protector. Glubb Pasha himself went on a number of trips to persuade mayors and other influential public figures that their interests would be better served by co-operation with Abdullah than by co-operation with the mufti. The activities of the Legion were accompanied by a propaganda campaign directed against the Jewish forces. These and Abdullah's frequent statements that he would send his army to protect the Arabs of Palestine all contributed to the Jewish perception that the Legion had abandoned its earlier neutrality.

Ben-Gurion was concerned about this trend and asked Sasson to brief him on April 20. Sasson told him that Abdullah's power was rising because everyone recognized that his force, the Legion, would have to be used. Britain wanted to secure her lines of communication between the Mediterranean, Transjordan, and Iraq. Legion units were accordingly stationed on the route passing through Gaza, Beersheba, Hebron, Jerusalem, and the Allenby Bridge. Britain herself would remain in Haifa, ensuring the route to Transjordan through Beisan and Naharayim with the help of the Legion, whose forces were being deployed along this route. Without the Legion Britain could not secure these routes and she could not use the Legion without the consent of the Arab League. The League, seeing how hard-pressed the Palestinian irregulars had become, realized that regular armies would be needed, above all the Legion. From the Arab press it emerged that the League had decided to use the regular armies of Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Transjordan, and possibly Egypt. Abdullah believed that all these armies would not last very long and only he would be able to take their place because only he had an army which was not needed at home. Sasson concluded his briefing with the surprising recommendation that they initiate a clash with the Legion before May 15.

The fact that a Jewish initiative to attack the Legion before the end of the mandate could even be contemplated reveals the speed

with which relations had deteriorated and Jewish assumptions had changed. Whereas previously it had been assumed that Abdullah would use his army to give effect to his secret agreement with the Jewish Agency, the new working assumption was that the agreement was dead and that Britain would direct the operations of the Legion to meet her needs and the wishes of the Arab League. Abdullah did not help matters by issuing a stream of public statements designed to establish his credentials as an Arab nationalist, and which for that very reason were seen by the Jews as incompatible with his earlier pledge. On April 21, Abdullah declared in a statement to the Arab News Agency that after the incidents of Deir Yassin, Haifa, and Tiberias he had given up hope for a peaceful solution to the Palestine problem. If invited to defend Palestine, he would accept. The Jews still had time to settle the dispute if they agreed to the constitution of Palestine as an Arab state with autonomy for the areas where the Jews formed a majority.

The Arabists of the Jewish Agency took the statement to mean that Abdullah was intending to impose a solution and that he was thinking of a variation of the Morrison–Grady Plan, giving the Jews autonomy within his state. Even Yaacov Shimoni confessed that up to that point he had believed that Abdullah would capture the Arab part while avoiding a clash with them, and that after he had consolidated his position in the Arab part he would start negotiating with them. But now Shimoni was no longer certain: he conceded that Abdullah's thinking might have changed as a result of recent events.

For military as well as political reasons, Ben-Gurion was reluctant to provoke a showdown with the strongest of the Arab regular armies, but he authorized Sasson to issue a warning to Abdullah. Following Abdullah's statement, Sasson sent a telegram in Arabic to the royal court to say that peace in Palestine and mutual understanding between Jews and Arabs could not be achieved by threats based on biased and misleading propaganda. Nor could it be achieved by one side dictating conditions to the other. Real understanding could only be achieved by direct and quiet negotiations guided by a sincere intention to guarantee the

rights and independence of Arabs and Jews alike. Sasson believed that the Jews would welcome any step in that direction and volunteered his personal services for the task.

The wording of this telegram was more abrupt than the earlier communication from the Jewish Agency to the king following the Deir Yassin massacre. The new message was a judicious mixture of menace and readiness to negotiate. Sasson received a prompt reply from the head of the Royal Diwan:

> I found nothing in your telegram to warrant my bringing it to His Majesty's notice since His Majesty's statement was quite unambiguous. There can be no question of threat or intimidation after what happened in Deir Yassin, Tiberias, and Haifa. As to your personal services, they will be acceptable if you comply with what is stated in His Majesty's declaration, namely, that the sovereignty of the Arabs in their country may not be contested, and that the Jewish community will be granted citizenship, with the same rights and obligations as the Arabs, and with a decentralized administration in those areas where they form a majority.

In confidence Abdullah told Kirkbride that in view of the publicity attending his exchanges with the Jewish Agency, the offer of an autonomous Jewish administration in an Arab state was as far as he could go. He did not expect the Jews to accept such terms but his purpose was to keep the door open for negotiations when both sides were in a more reasonable frame of mind.

There was indeed no chance whatever of the Jews accepting such terms and their very mention put them in a more belligerent frame of mind. Even the diplomatic Sharett cabled his suggestion from New York that Abdullah be warned privately that if the Legion went into action, the Jews had the means to wipe out whole units and would use them. The possibility of an armed clash with the Legion also dominated Ben-Gurion's military calculations. With a sigh of relief he recorded in his diary on April 24: 'At long last I received the news that the first cannons have arrived—there should be 31 with shells . . . This changes the situation once more in a radical fashion—we shall not stand defenceless against the armoured cars of the Legion and its cannons.'

It was typical of the two leaders that while Ben-Gurion devoted his formidable organizational powers to arming the Haganah for the forthcoming battle, Abdullah concentrated on the propaganda war at which he was a past master. Immediately after the Transjordanian Parliament had ratified the decision to send the Legion into Palestine, Abdullah told a press conference that 'All our efforts to bring about a peaceful solution have failed. The only way left to us is war. To me has fallen the honour to save Palestine.' This statement was a bitter blow to the Jewish officials. It was generally construed as a declaration of war on the Jews. With its emphasis on the inevitability of war and on Abdullah's self-appointed role as saviour, it shattered what was left of the hopes that he and his Legion would stay neutral. To Ben-Gurion, however, the news, though disappointing, came as no surprise. The newspapers, he noted calmly in his diary, announced that Abdullah had 'declared war' on the Zionists. Whether Abdullah declared or did not declare, he wrote, made very little practical difference. 'It was obvious all along that we should expect two things: aerial bombardment by the forces of Egypt, Iraq and others, and the attack of the Arab Legion.'

These were precisely the two things that the Arab chiefs of staff, following the military logic of the situation, recommended to their governments in the course of the Arab League discussions in Amman in the last week of April. The Military Committee, after hearing a report from General Safwat, concluded that in order to overcome the Jewish forces, the invasion must be supported by no less than five fully equipped divisions and six air force squadrons operating under a single command. This conclusion was passed on to the Political Committee which convened in Amman at the same time. In addition to the voices of the soldiers, the full weight of public opinion was brought to bear on the Arab leaders to dispatch regular troops to Palestine immediately.

The leaders, however, were very apprehensive of embarking on a campaign against forces of unknown strength. No agreement was reached at the first meeting with King Abdullah at which neither Egypt nor Syria was represented. The only practical outcome was to send the Lebanese prime minister, Riad al-Sulh,

to Cairo with a letter from King Abdullah to Azzam Pasha saying that Transjordan could not cope with the situation alone and before moving must be assured of the full support of the Arab states in men, money, and material. In Cairo, al-Sulh, with the help of Abd al-Illah, the Iraqi regent, pressed for Egyptian participation in an invasion of Palestine and pleaded with King Farouk that Egypt could not continue to do less for Palestine than other Arab countries without losing prestige. However, he met with strong resistance from Egypt's prime minister, Mahmud Nuqrashi. The conservative Nuqrashi, nicknamed 'the timid sphinx' by Egyptians and 'Old Nokkers' by British officials, was opposed to such action generally and by Egypt in particular.

Although the Egyptian government reserved its position, at the last meeting of the Arab summit in Amman, on April 29, a decision was reached, in principle, in favour of intervention by the regular Arab armies. On the question of date there was a heated discussion because King Abdullah said he could not intervene before May 15 whereas the other leaders felt that waiting until then to move their troops would give the Jews a great tactical advantage. It was secretly decided that Syrian, Iraqi, and Lebanese troops, in the guise of volunteers, would start crossing into Palestine on May 8 under instructions to avoid all contact with British and Jewish forces before May 15. It was also agreed that British representations on the subject should continue to be met by promises to do nothing before the end of the mandate and that if the presence of the so-called volunteers in Palestine was discovered, the Arab governments should deny all knowledge.

The real argument was over the question of command. King Abdullah maintained that command should be in Transjordanian hands and with a headquarters in Amman. Azzam Pasha was in favour of continuing the current arrangements with a headquarters in Damascus under Ismail Safwat or another Iraqi general. The Iraqis wanted an Iraqi in overall command wherever the headquarters might be situated. Abul Huda said resolutely that Transjordan would not place the Arab Legion under the existing command at Damascus. To break the deadlock, it was agreed by those present that each state should retain its

independent command and be allocated an operational zone in Palestine. The Arab League allocated £1,500,000 to finance the opening stages of the operation; the secretary-general was given control over these funds, and representatives of the General Staffs of the armies concerned were invited to Amman to work out the technical and logistical details.

When the conference was over, Maj. Charles Coaker, one of the Legion's British officers, drove a high-ranking Iraqi from the royal palace back to the centre of Amman. 'How was the meeting?' he politely asked his passenger. 'Splendid', was the reply. 'We all agreed to fight separately.'

Jewish aggressiveness, coupled with the inability of the United Nations to curb it, exhausted Abdullah's patience. To an appeal by a Truce Commission for Palestine established by the Security Council on April 23 and consisting of the consul-generals of the United States, France, and Belgium, in Jerusalem, asking Abdullah to refrain from intervening in Palestine, he replied that if the commission could guarantee that there would be no aggression from the Jews, then there would be no aggression from the Arabs. 'It is known', he said, 'that the Arab Nation, including her member states of the United Nations Organization, have rejected partition as well as the establishment of a Jewish state which would compete with the Arabs for their sovereignty in their homeland. You should compel them to remove any aggression and abandon the idea of establishing a Jewish state thus making it possible to establish peace in the Holy Land.' Ernest Bevin rallied to the defence of his ally. He felt that it was unfair that Abdullah should be singled out for this admonition at a time when actual aggression was coming from the Jews. He made some scathing remarks about the totalitarian form of government which the Jews were preparing and insisted that the Americans must act resolutely to stop Jewish aggression if they wanted him to continue to do his best to keep the Arabs in check.

Amman was a vortex of conflicting pressures from the Arab world, the Palestinians, the Zionists, the British, and now the Americans as well. Abdullah's hopes of a clean and peaceful division of Palestine with the Zionists had been dimmed, if not

extinguished, by the rising tide of violence sweeping through the country. The success of the Haganah's military offensive generated powerful pressures for intervention by the regular armies of the Arab states. Abdullah was now impaled on the horns of a dilemma which was at least in part of his own making. If he threw in his lot with the Arab world, he would forfeit any claim on Jewish goodwill and material support. If he tried to remain neutral, he would be denounced as a traitor to the Arab cause and could end up by losing not only Palestine but his throne. From the very beginning Abdullah's agreement with the Jews suffered from a built-in constraint: he could not divulge to his own ministers, let alone to other Arab politicians, the fact of its existence. Under these circumstances it was not always possible to prevent lower-level violations of the agreement.

The first open violation of the agreement occurred on the night between 28 and 29 April when the Arab Legion attacked Kibbutz Gesher which lay just north of the hydroelectric works in Naharayim and guarded an important point of entry into the country. It was the first major attack by the Legion across the border and as such was a violation of the promise that Abdullah had made to Golda Meir and Abul Huda had made to Bevin not to attack the area allotted by the United Nations to the Jews. Since it also proved to be the last attack, it may well have been, as a British officer of the Legion claimed afterwards, an unfortunate local misunderstanding. The immediate cause for the attack was the seizure by the settlers of Gesher of a nearby British police fortress. According to Abdullah al-Tall, an officer in the Legion who was to achieve both fame and notoriety, when the British officers evacuated this important fortress they invited Glubb Pasha to take it over but he declined the offer because he knew of the general plan which forbade the capture of any point situated according to the UN partition resolution within the Jewish state. In any case, once the Jewish settlers had occupied the fortress and turned down an ultimatum to hand over the fortress and their settlement, the Legion mounted a co-ordinated attack with infantry, artillery, and armour. The settlement would have fallen into the hands of the Legion but for Abdullah contacting his son

Talal, who was on the scene, and telling him to order the battalion commander to halt the attack.

Avraham Daskal, the manager of the hydroelectric works, throws an interesting sidelight on the circumstances that led to the royal order to call off the highly effective opening attack by his army across the Jordan. When the settlement was under fire, one of the settlers came swimming down the river to call for help. Daskal, whose telephone line no longer worked, drove to the nearest police station and called the palace. He was promised, by Muhammad Zubati, a cease-fire of one hour. This made it possible to evacuate the women and children and to rush in reinforcements. In Naharayim itself there was a quantity of arms, both legal arms given by the British and illegal arms made in Poland and hidden in caches, all of which were transferred to the settlement. In co-ordination with the Haganah commander, Daskal also opened the dams north of Gesher to flood the Jordan, thus making it impossible for armoured cars to cross over to the Jewish side.

Daskal's success in arranging a cease-fire raised a flicker of hope in Ben-Gurion's heart that an official attack by the Legion might still be averted. The Haganah force sent to defend Gesher was authorized to blow up the bridge over the river near Naharayim. On hearing that such action would constitute a violation of the agreement with Transjordan, he gave an order not to destroy the bridge. Though badly damaged, both the settlement at Gesher and the police fortress remained in Jewish hands and later played an important part in impeding the crossing of the Iraqi forces into Palestine.

A message from Glubb Pasha

Glubb Pasha was at least as anxious as King Abdullah to avoid a head-on collision between the Arab Legion and the Haganah—not out of love for the Jews but out of profound concern for the well-being of the Arab Legion. Having dedicated the best part of his professional career to building up the Legion,

he was exceedingly reluctant to throw it into battle against heavy odds and run the risk of its destruction. As a wise and prudent soldier, Glubb's first concern was to conserve his tiny force and not expose it to the threat of attrition at the hands of the Jewish forces who had already shown their mettle on the battlefield. Although King Abdullah was the titular head of the Arab Legion, effective control was in the hands of its British commander. Commanded, officered, and financed by the British, it was primarily an instrument of British policy rather than of Transjordanian or Arab policy. Both Glubb and Kirkbride treated Abdullah with the utmost deference but he knew and they knew that in the final analysis he could not use it in defiance of Britain's wishes. Glubb's aims, as his intervention in the Bevin–Huda meeting had suggested, were slightly more modest than those of King Abdullah. He wanted to use the Legion to gain control only over those Arab areas on the West Bank which were contiguous with Transjordan. He wanted to prevent the mufti and the Husaynis from gaining control over this area and this task seemed relatively easy because the British administration in Palestine could simply hand over this area to the Legion at the end of the mandate. The real problem lay in averting a clash with the Jews amidst the confusion and chaos that accompanied the termination of the mandate.

Glubb remained undisturbed by the setbacks of Qawukji and the death of Abd al-Qadir Husayni. Nor was he prepared to send reinforcements in response to the Palestinian pleas for help in Tiberias and Safed because these towns were included by the United Nations in the Jewish state. He was, however, disturbed by signs that the Jews were preparing to capture areas that had not been allocated to them and he was alarmed by the mounting Jewish offensive in Jerusalem which culminated in the capture of Katamon on April 30. An Arab quarter in south-east Jerusalem, Katamon was important to the control of the Jewish and Arab parts of the city alike. A danger that Glubb could not ignore was that the Haganah would not be content with securing the new Jerusalem but would make a bid to capture the Old City as well. He therefore resolved to establish direct contact with the

Haganah to elicit what its real intentions were and to avert a major clash if at all possible.

Brig. Norman Lash, Glubb's second-in-command and trusted lieutenant, was asked to arrange the contact with the enemy. Lash summoned Col. Desmond Goldie, a senior British officer serving with the Arab Legion, to his headquarters in Mafraq and entrusted him with this unusual liaison mission. The gist of the verbal message that Goldie was to convey was an offer from Glubb to delay the forward move of the Arab Legion in order to give the Haganah time to establish control over the Jewish areas and then fight a kind of mock war if they had to.

The meeting with Jewish officers took place in Naharayim on May 2—two weeks before the end of the mandate. Colonel Goldie was accompanied by another British officer, Maj. Charles Coaker, on this cloak and dagger mission into enemy territory. The Haganah was represented by Maj.-Gen. Shlomo Shamir (Rabinovich), assisted by Nahum Spiegel, the operations officer of the Golani Brigade.

Colonel Goldie opened this extraordinary meeting by stressing that they were speaking in Glubb's name and that they were anxious to make arrangements for further meetings. Their reason for initiating this contact was to avert a clash between their respective forces. The British did not want to clash with the Jews; the problem, he explained, was that they could not afford to appear to be blocking and betraying the Arab cause. Shamir responded by saying that provided the Legion did not fight, did not cover offensive Arab operations, and did not go anywhere it should not be, he saw no reason for a clash.

Next, Goldie tried to elicit the Jewish intentions: did they plan to capture the whole country? The reply he received was deliberately non-committal: the borders of the Jewish state are a matter for the politicians to determine but if military needs so dictated, the Haganah was capable of capturing the whole country. The situation in Jerusalem was of particular concern to Goldie and he asked: how can a clash be averted there? To this Shamir replied that their position on Jerusalem was well known. If the Legion refrained from attacking the Jewish sector of

Jerusalem, if the road to it remained open, and if the Jewish settlements around Jerusalem and the roads leading to them were not endangered he thought there would be no reason to clash.

Shamir went away with the impression that Glubb's secret emissaries wanted, first, to establish a regular channel of communication; second, to probe the Haganah's plans and likely response should the Legion defend the Arab area; and third, to come to an arrangement about Jerusalem, where the situation was giving them cause for worry.

Shamir's own purpose in going to this meeting was essentially the same as that of his British counterparts: to gain a first-hand impression of what the Arab Legion planned to do after the withdrawal of the British from Palestine, to find out whether it would be possible to reach an understanding and accord at the military level, and to establish a more or less regular channel of communication for future use.

Little wonder that 'the pasha', as his subordinates reverently called him, makes no mention whatever of this friendly little meeting in his admirably detailed and elegantly written memoirs. The title of these memoirs, *A Soldier with the Arabs,* neatly bypasses the hierarchical question of whether he served the Arabs or ruled over them. Arab nationalists like Abdullah al-Tall denounced him as the instrument of British imperial domination over Transjordan and suspected him of collusion with the Zionists to prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state, and the cloak and dagger meeting in Naharayim was incriminating on both counts. There was something bizarre about this meeting at which the army of a supposedly independent Arab state was represented by two British officers who spoke in the name of another British officer, and the lengths they went to in concealing all knowledge of their mission from their Transjordanian colleagues makes it tempting to conclude that the entire mission was designed to serve specifically British interests rather than Transjordanian ones. It is not that King Abdullah was opposed in principle to a dialogue with the Jews or that the purpose of the meeting—preventing war between the Legion and the Haganah—was unacceptable to him, but rather that in this

instance his most senior military officer went behind his back in contacting 'the other side'. From the Jewish point of view the attempt to prevent a war would have been much more convincing had it been made in the name of Glubb and Abdullah jointly.

As it were, the Goldie–Shamir meeting was of some value to the commanders of the Haganah because it showed that the British considered them a military force to be reckoned with and it gave them some indication of the Legion's operational plans. But it gave them no indication as to how, if at all, these British plans were related to King Abdullah's overall political orientation. Ben-Gurion accurately summarized Shamir's report on the meeting in his diary but gave not a hint of the conclusions he drew from it. It was Golda Meir who, a day before the Goldie–Shamir meeting, expressed to Ben-Gurion her interest in going to see King Abdullah again. Ben-Gurion was obviously in two minds. 'I agree to the attempt,' he wrote, 'although I do not expect much, but it is worth trying to prevent awkward developments before or after May 15.' The report on the Goldie–Shamir meeting probably heightened his interest in such an attempt.

If Abdullah really wanted such a meeting, there was no sign of it in his public utterances. On the contrary, he issued a direct appeal, on May 6, to the 'Jewish community in Palestine', repeating his offer of equal rights and autonomy in the predominantly Jewish areas and warning that they would only have themselves to blame if they rejected the offer. Sasson responded by sending a long letter in Arabic to one of his many friends in Amman, a letter conveyed by a foreign correspondent, probably to Dr Sati. Sasson reprimanded his friend for making no effort to contact him and expressed bitterness at Abdullah's failure to reply to his two-week-old request for an interview to renew the agreement between them. As for the threats and conditions issued by Abdullah, Sasson asserted that they were incompatible with the spirit of the agreement between them. No practical results would be yielded by public statements and proclamations, warned Sasson; on the contrary, they could only deepen the conflict. The Jews had not gone back on the promise they had made at Naharayim and were ready to meet again to renew the

agreement and make the necessary arrangements for its implementation. But they were not ready to countenance any attempt to impose new conditions which contradicted the original agreement. They wanted to bring peace to their part of the world but not at the expense of their security or independence.

Sasson hinted that they had received offers from Abdullah's rivals to settle the dispute but had declined them so far on account of their promise to Abdullah and their common interests. From the king's statements Sasson inferred that Transjordan and Iraq planned to attack and he warned that any hostile act would bring calamity on both countries. The beginning of aggression, he observed, is always clear, but its end cannot be foreseen and a particularly fearsome punishment was reserved for Iraq should it take the initiative. Transjordan's attack and conquest of the Arab part, however, was acceptable to the Jews provided it was in line with their earlier agreement and did not include an attack on the other part. The letter concluded by saying that it was not too late to meet again and settle matters amicably and that it was up to Abdullah to choose between reconciliation, which they would welcome, or attack, which would bring forth a counter-attack. In its tone this was the most incisive and trenchant letter ever addressed by Sasson to Abdullah before or after. In substance it was the usual mixture of threats and blandishments but with the emphasis very much on the former.

7

On the Brink

Two invasion plans

On May 11 the Political Committee of the Arab League met in Damascus to address some of the military issues that, with only four days to go until the termination of the mandate, could no longer be evaded. These discussions revealed the incompetence and the folly of the Arab politicians and the fatal weakness of insisting on rights without regard to practicality. Glubb Pasha illustrates this weakness by quoting a despairing comment of King Abdullah after one of the meetings of the Arab League's Political Committee:

> If I were to drive into the desert and accost the first goatherd I saw and consult him whether to make war on my enemies or not, he would say to me, 'How many have you got and how many have they?' Yet here are these learned politicians, all of them with university degrees, and when I say to them, 'The Jews are too strong—it is a mistake to make war', they cannot understand the point. They make long speeches about rights.

King Abdullah's inability to see eye to eye with the Egyptians was attributed by Glubb not solely to a clash of interests but also to some organic difference in their mental make-up. For the king was 'a practical man, always ready to make a bargain or consider a compromise'. A Palestinian, on the other hand, had told Glubb, 'Better for us all to be exterminated than for us to agree to give a yard of our country'. This peculiarity was attributed to the mentality of the Levantine Arabs. Glubb conceded that there was something admirable in this resolution to demand that which was right, regardless of the cost; he merely observed that the effect on the fate of the Palestinian Arabs was utterly disastrous.

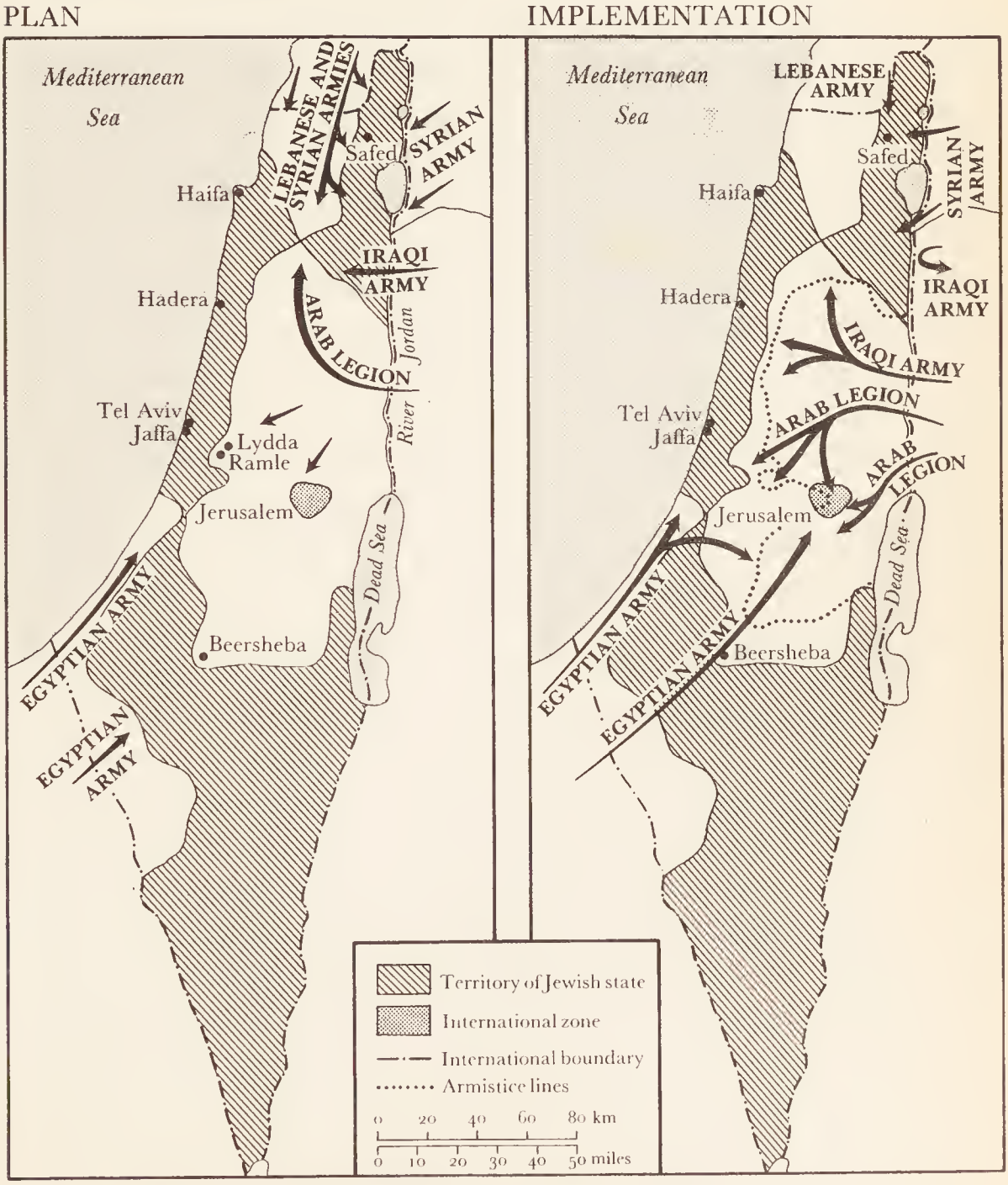
King Abdullah was unquestionably more pragmatic than the other Arab politicians, and the differences in the outlook of their

leaders undoubtedly imposed strains on the relations between the member states of the Arab League. This, however, should not be allowed to obscure the fact that the strains within the League, which were to have such disastrous consequences for the Arab cause, had their roots in a clash of interests and an abiding mistrust between the Hashemite and the anti-Hashemite blocs. Suspecting Abdullah of collusion with the Zionists, the anti-Hashemite states stepped up the pressure for invading Palestine, if only to curb Abdullah's territorial ambition and stall his bid for hegemony in the Arab world. Diplomatic, strategic, and military co-ordination became extremely difficult, if not impossible, to achieve under the circumstances.

A prime example was the question of a unified military command which the politicians were called upon to settle. Gen. Ismail Safwat had been the key figure in the Arab League's military planning and preparation for the conflict in Palestine since October 1947 and was therefore the obvious candidate for the post of supreme commander for all the regular and irregular forces involved in the invasion of Palestine. Under pressure from Abdullah and the Iraqi regent, however, the Political Committee was forced to replace Safwat with another Iraqi general, Nur al-Din Mahmud, who was weaker in character, less anti-British, and more amenable to the influence of Abdullah and Glubb. Since Abdullah demanded the position of supreme commander for himself, the committee designated Nur al-Din Mahmud as his deputy. Within a matter of days, however, it became clear that the notion of a commander-in-chief and a unified command was nothing but a fiction since none of the countries bothered to consult or co-ordinate their activities.

Another vitally important task on the agenda of the politicians who assembled in Damascus, with or without their university degrees, was to put the finishing touches on the plan prepared by their military experts for the invasion of Palestine. The original military plan was drawn up by General Safwat's operations officer, Capt. Wasfi al-Tall, who later became prime minister of Jordan. It called for a northern thrust by the Lebanese, Syrian and Liberation armies, spear-headed by an Iraqi armoured force

to capture the port of Haifa, while a narrow southern thrust by the Egyptian army up to the coastal plain would seize Jaffa, thus depriving the Jewish state of the ports it needed to bring in men and arms. At the same time, the Arab Legion and the balance of the Iraqi Army would aim to cut the new state in half by thrusting across the coastal plain from the Judean hills to the sea north of Tel Aviv (see Map 5). Eleven days was the estimated duration of



Map 5 The 'Damascus plan' compared with the actual invasion

the campaign. To carry it out Tall asked that virtually all of the Arab armies be placed under one supreme commander. In the opinion of informed observers, if those forces, prepared or not, could have been made available, Tall's plan would have had every chance of success. Even by Ben-Gurion's morbidly pessimistic standards, the plan would have ranked as the worst possible scenario for the state that was about to be born.

But the forces demanded by the young and very capable operations officer could not be made available and as a result Ben-Gurion's worst nightmare did not come true. The forces actually made available by the Arab states for the campaign in Palestine were well below the level demanded by the Military Committee. Immediately following his appointment as deputy to the supreme commander, General Mahmud was instructed by the Political Committee to prepare a plan for driving a wedge between the area around Tiberias and the coastal plain. Tall's ambitious plan was therefore hurriedly scaled down by Mahmud and the other Arab military chiefs.

The revised plan required the Syrian and Lebanese armies to move from north to south, through Safed to Nazareth; the Transjordanian and the Iraqi armies to move westward through Afuleh to Nazareth; and the Egyptian army to move towards Tel Aviv to pin down and destroy Jewish forces and thereby help the other armies to accomplish their particular missions. As Salih Saib al-Juburi, the Iraqi chief of staff, points out in his memoirs, the aim of this plan was to detach the north-eastern part from the Jewish state through simultaneous thrusts by four Arab armies. The specific objective was to cut off the lines of communication between Huleh, Tiberias, Beisan, and other Zionist settlements along the Jordan River from cities along the Mediterranean. This was to be achieved by proceeding step by step through Jenin, Afuleh, and Nazareth so as to surround the Zionist villages and settlements to the east. From these forward positions the Arab armies were intended to move, if conditions were favourable, to occupy Haifa and Tel Aviv.

This revised plan was much more modest, at least in its initial aims, than is commonly believed or the slogan of 'throwing the

Jews into the sea' would imply. But as the Israeli military historian Meir Pail has pointed out, it was precisely because the plan was so cautious and tailored to the ability of the regular Arab armies that it posed such a threat to the Jewish state. Firstly, the assignment of four or five regular Arab armies to the task of encirclement gave the plan a very realistic chance of success. Secondly, the loss of the lower Galilee and the valleys of Beisan and Jezreel could have dealt a body blow to the embryonic Jewish state and placed its survival in the balance even without attempting a pincer movement in the second stage, with one arm aiming at Haifa and the other at Tel Aviv.

The danger to the Jewish state did not materialize however, because the Damascus plan was not put into operation in the way that the Arab chiefs of staff had originally recommended. General Mahmud changed the plan by moving the Syrian army from the north to the southern tip of Lake Tiberias, alongside the Iraqi army. This change was made at the request of the Transjordanian authorities. The Transjordanians insisted on the concentration of their forces in the Jerusalem area, Hebron and the Nablus–Jenin–Tulkarem Triangle, and despite all his efforts Mahmud was unable to persuade them to act in accordance with the original plan.

General Juburi did not learn about the change until May 14. He was dismayed to discover that because of the Transjordanian refusal to co-operate, the Lebanese army would be left alone in the north and insufficient forces would be available to occupy the Beisan area which he considered to be of great importance. Unable to intervene directly with the Transjordanian HQ, Juburi informed the Iraqi regent and Azzam Pasha of his concern and they agreed to urge King Abdullah to adhere to the original plan. The regent, Azzam Pasha, Juburi, and Mahmud went together to plead with King Abdullah, and he agreed to send one unit through the Allenby Bridge to Beisan and to move another unit from Jenin to Afuleh in accordance with the plan that had been agreed upon in Damascus. In their presence the king issued the necessary orders to the HQ of his army but those orders were not carried out, possibly because they were countermanded by the wily old man himself after his visitors had left the palace.

By insisting on this last-minute change King Abdullah wrecked the Damascus plan, with disastrous consequences for the invading armies. Abdullah had never asked for or wanted Egyptian or Syrian or Iraqi or Lebanese intervention. He probably estimated that even with Transjordan's co-operation the Arab forces would not be capable of reaching Haifa and Tel Aviv. What he told his partners in effect was that they could decide whatever they wanted but he in any case was going to give priority to his part of Palestine, and his part was the central area contiguous with his country, not the north or the south or the west.

Whereas the political objective implicit in the Arab League's plan was to prevent the partition of Palestine, Abdullah's objective was to effect the partition of Palestine by war and to bring the central part under his crown. By concentrating his own forces in the West Bank, Abdullah intended to eliminate once and for all any possibility of an independent Palestinian state and to present his partners with annexation as a *fait accompli.* It was only in the light of this political objective that the modifications demanded by Transjordan made any strategic sense. From the military point of view the Hashemite plan had every chance of success because it did not necessitate a full-scale war with the Jewish forces; it did not require the co-operation of the non-Hashemite states, and was not likely to encounter any serious resistance on the part of the Palestinian inhabitants of the West Bank.

Both the Damascus plan and the Hashemite plan were characterized by total disregard for the rights, interests, and even military potential of the Palestine Arabs. Neither plan assigned any significant role to the people who had started the war in December 1947 in order to 'wipe out in red what had been written in black'. In the coming offensive to save Palestine from the Jews, the Palestinians were not even requested to carry out guerrilla operations against the Jewish forces or to perform any combat-support missions. This exclusion reflected both the contempt felt by the Arab League's chiefs of staff for guerrilla warfare and, more significantly, the refusal of the politicians of the League to

treat the Palestinian community as a political partner with a legitimate claim to a state of its own. The tacit assumption behind both the Damascus plan and the Hashemite plan was that Britain was leaving behind a power vacuum in Palestine; that the neighbouring Arab states would rush to fill this vacuum, and that the Palestinian community could be excluded from the eventual division of the territorial spoils. In short, both the Hashemites and the anti-Hashemites were preparing for a general land grab.

The fundamental difference between the Damascus plan and the Hashemite plan lay in their responses to the challenge of the emergent Jewish state. The former envisaged crippling the Jewish state by the co-ordinated attack of four Arab armies on its northern part where much of the manpower, water, and agricultural resources were located. In the less definite second stage it was hoped to reach Haifa and deprive the Jewish state of its major seaport. The Hashemite plan, on the other hand, did not envisage an attack on Jewish territory and was not directed at preventing the establishment of a Jewish state. An armed confrontation with the Jewish state was precisely what Abdullah was anxious to avoid, hence his objection to the Damascus plan. The success of that plan spelled doom for his own. Were the Jewish state to disintegrate and the Syrian and Egyptian armies to emerge victorious, it would have been unlikely, to say the least, that the Arab League would have allowed Abdullah to take the West Bank. His plan assumed and even required a Jewish presence rather than a military victory by his Arab rivals.

It is tempting to conclude that only a tacit agreement with the Jews could account for the Hashemite invasion plan which proved so fatal to the strategy of the Arab League and to the hopes of an independent Palestinian Arab state. But such a conclusion is not wholly warranted by the facts. In essence, Abdullah's decision not to attack the Jewish state was not part of a bargain but a one-sided choice which flowed from a realistic appraisal of the balance of forces. No doubt the original agreement that the Jews would not stand in his way played a part here. Nevertheless, Abdullah did not subvert the Arab League's

invasion plan in collusion with the Jews, he replaced it with a different plan tailored to serve his specific dynastic ambitions.

In the past the shrewd Hijazi chieftain had always believed that the Palestinian community was weak and divided and that he could therefore dominate it, but that the Jewish community was too united, strong, and advanced to be destroyed and should therefore be turned into an ally. But in the circumstances of May 1948, he did not need the permission of the Jews to move into Palestine and impose his rule over the Palestinians. He already had the Arab League's official sanction for intervention, however reluctant, and Britain's discreet support, as well as considerable political backing on the West Bank. All he was waiting for was the official end of the mandate and the outbreak of hostilities that would justify the crossing of the Jordan and the annexation of central Palestine.

If Abdullah double-crossed his partners just as they were about to do battle with the Zionist enemy in Palestine, none of those partners appear in retrospect to have been a shining example of integrity or altruism. All betrayed by their actions the pan-Arab ideal they professed to be serving in their rhetoric. All displayed suspicion and anxiety lest their rivals should exploit the Palestinian Arab cause as a vehicle for promoting their separate regional ambitions. Indeed, it may be argued that the Arab League's decision to intervene was rooted not in a common interest to save Palestine for the Palestinians or to defeat Zionist ambitions but in inter-Arab fears and rivalries.

Golda Meir and Abdullah: the last meeting

The last ditch attempt to dissuade Abdullah from joining in the invasion of Palestine was made by Golda Meir while the Arab League was putting the final touches on the invasion plan in Damascus. Abdullah had already made his own last attempt at a peaceful solution: through Muhammad Zubati, his trusted private secretary and confidant, he inquired whether the Jewish leaders would be prepared to cede to him some of the territory allotted to them by the United Nations so as to provide him with

an argument to persuade the Arab world to settle for partition. The answer given to his emissary was that there could be no question of any territorial concessions and, moreover, acceptance of the United Nations borders was subject to the partition scheme being implemented peacefully. If the Arabs went to war, the Jews would no longer be bound by the UN borders and everyone would take whatever was in his power to take.

Nothing further was heard from the king after Zubati's return to Amman with this message. But with an Arab invasion looking ever more likely, Golda Meir pressed for another direct meeting with him before it was too late. A great deal hung in the balance: not only was the Legion by far the best Arab army but, if by any remote chance it could be kept out of the conflict, the Iraqi army might not reach Palestine to participate in the attack. Ben-Gurion was of the opinion that there was nothing to be lost by trying. 'This time it is clear that the mandate will terminate,' he wrote in his diary on May 7. 'Will the neighbouring states fight? It is evident that there is hesitation on the part of Transjordan and Norman told our men that Abdullah wants to meet us.' Col. Oskar Norman was the intelligence chief of the British administration in Palestine and one of the few British officers who remained sympathetic to the Jewish side until the very end. Ben-Gurion was anxious to expedite the meeting but he rejected Elias Sasson's suggestion that the meeting be made open and official. Ben-Gurion personally contacted Avraham Rutenberg to try to arrange a private interview for Golda Meir with Abdullah.

Rutenberg referred the request to Avraham Daskal, who immediately contacted his old friend Muhammad Zubati. Zubati thought a meeting was out of the question but after obtaining the king's agreement to see Rutenberg and Daskal, he drove them the 180 kilometres from Naharayim to his house near the royal palace in Amman. Abdullah came from the palace, where the Jewish visitors would have been recognized, to Zubati's house. Looking pale and sad, he complained that the Jewish Agency had waited so long before sending someone to see him and said he did not see how he could receive Mrs Meir after the Jewish atrocities in Deir

Yassin and elsewhere. It took a great deal of persuasion to get him to relent, but eventually he did.

On hearing that Abdullah had agreed to see Mrs Meir, Ben-Gurion arranged for a plane to pick her up in Jerusalem, which was under siege, bring her to Tel Aviv for consultations, and then take her to Haifa whence she would proceed to Naharayim by car. In a cable Ben-Gurion informed her that she must get to the meeting urgently and that he himself preferred this arrangement to an official meeting. 'We brought Golda from Jerusalem', wrote Ben-Gurion in his diary, 'so she can travel to meet the friend. For the time being we have settled on two guidelines: (1) agreement based on the UN [resolution], (2) or mutual border rectification.' Elias Sasson was supposed to accompany Mrs Meir to the meeting with 'the friend' but for some reason failed to await her in Haifa and serve as interpreter at the meeting, and Danin went with her instead.

They arrived at Daskal's house in Naharayim in the afternoon of May 10. There, to avoid arousing the suspicion of the numerous Legionnaires stationed along the road, Danin put on the traditional Arab headgear and Mrs Meir changed into the voluminous black robes worn by Arab women. Security precautions were particularly elaborate on this occasion because news of the meeting had leaked out and widespread rumours and speculations about it increased the risks of detection. Abdullah declined to come to Naharayim this time because it was too dangerous and because he could not afford to inflame any further Arab suspicions of his wheeling and dealing with the Zionists. So Muhammad Zubati, who had run many dangerous errands for Abdullah in the past, arrived after dark to collect the visitors and drive them to his own house in Amman. Danin had been a close associate of Zubati over a period of several years when they had owned orchards in partnership on the border, selling the fruit in Palestine where prices were higher than those current in Transjordan or the neighbouring Arab countries, but despite this long association the tense silence of this particular journey to Amman was broken only on approaching one of the dozen or so Arab

Legion checkpoints by Zubati shouting his name and being waved on.

Abdullah received the visitors cordially but he looked depressed, troubled, and nervous. Through Zubati he had already sent his offer: the country would remain undivided, with autonomy for the areas in which the Jews predominated. This arrangement would last one year and then the country would be joined with Transjordan. There would be one Parliament, in which the Jews would have 50 per cent of the seats, and a Cabinet in which they would also be represented. Abdullah opened the talk by asking whether they had received his offer. Mrs Meir replied affirmatively, adding that she had thought it necessary to come and meet him in person even though his offer was totally unacceptable. Abdullah talked about his desire for peace and avoiding the destruction of agriculture and industry. All along he had been for peace but now the only way to prevent war was to accept his offer. Why were the Jews in such a hurry to proclaim their state anyway?

Mrs Meir said she didn't think that a people who had waited two thousand years could be described as being in a hurry. She reminded Abdullah that they had made an agreement, and that the Jews counted on this agreement and on the long-standing friendship and mutual understanding with him. Having common enemies was one of the bases of that friendship. During the previous five months they had beaten those enemies: the power of the mufti in Palestine had declined markedly as a result of their military successes, while the foreign troops had been chased out of the country. As a result of their efforts, the road was now paved for Abdullah too as it had never been before.

Mrs Meir suggested that instead of Abdullah's new offer they should adhere to the original plan on which there was an agreement and an understanding between them. Abdullah did not deny that that was his wish, but things had happened in Palestine since, like the atrocity of Deir Yassin. Before he had been alone, now he was one of five; he had no choice and he could not act differently.

Mrs Meir remarked that they knew he was one out of five but

they always thought of him as someone who stood against the current. She also hinted that his difficulty was not only the other Arabs but the British who had already secured their position and stood to lose nothing even if he were to be defeated. Moreover, Jewish strength was not what it had been five months previously or even a month previously, and if there was war they would fight with all their strength. Abdullah accepted that they would have to repel an attack. Mrs Meir then stated that they were prepared to respect borders as long as there was peace. But in the event of war they would fight everywhere and with all their power. Again and again Abdullah repeated his warning, though not in a threatening manner. Throughout, the conversation remained friendly though he showed signs of strain and depression. He regretted the destruction and bloodshed, but he had no choice. He asked the Jews to think it over and if their reply was positive, it had to reach him before May 15. He would invite the Palestinian leaders who backed him and some of the moderate Arabs and would ask the Jews to send moderate representatives too and then the matter could be settled. Similarly, in the Cabinet there would be no extremist Arabs or Jew-haters but only moderate Arabs.

Mrs Meir reacted by saying that she did not want to delude Abdullah and therefore had to make it clear that his suggestion could not even serve as a basis for negotiations, not only would the responsible authorities not accept it but there would not be ten Jews who would lend their support to his autonomy plan. Her answer was immediate and categorical: it was out of the question. If Abdullah was going back on their agreement and if he wanted war, then they would meet after the war and after the Jewish state was established.

Abdullah said he had heard that Moshe Sharett was in France and wondered whether one of his men could meet Sharett there. Mrs Meir thought her colleague would stay in France only a short time and though he would no doubt be glad to meet, there could be no change in their position as she had stated it. On a slightly more hopeful note Abdullah proclaimed: 'We do not need America and Europe. We, the children of the Orient, must show

this miracle to the world. Let us get around one table and secure the peace between us.'

Towards the end of the conversation, which lasted about an hour, the king turned to Danin and asked in a fatherly voice why he, who was also a native of the Orient, did not help him in this conversation. Danin, who up to this point had scrupulously kept to his role as interpreter, now mustered his courage and warned the king against making a fatal mistake. The king, said Danin, had no real friends in the Arab world. And he was relying on the armoured cars of the Legion just as the French had relied on the Maginot Line. The Jews could smash his armour. It would be a pity if Abdullah destroyed with his own hands what he had built with so much toil. It was not too late to change course. Abdullah replied: 'I am very sorry. It would be a shame to shed blood and cause destruction. Let us hope we shall meet and not break off the contact between us. If you see any need to come and see me after the battles start, do not hesitate to come. I shall always be glad to meet you.' 'But how will I be able to get to you?' asked Danin. 'Oh, I trust you to find a way', said Abdullah with a smile.

Before they parted, Danin warned the king to put an end to his practice of allowing his followers to kiss the hem of his garment and to take more precautions against the evil-doers who were plotting against his life. 'My good friend,' replied the astonished monarch to Danin, 'I shall not abandon the customs of my ancestors. I was born a bedouin, a free man, and I shall never become the prisoner of my own guards. Come what may, I shall not stop my subjects from showing their affection towards me.' Then he bid his visitors farewell and left.

Over dinner Zubati told Mrs Meir and Danin that he did not want this war and that the king did not want it either. To illustrate the depth of the king's feelings, Zubati said that if he had to choose between a room full of pearls and the duty to go to war or peace without the treasure, the king would have forgone the pearls and opted for peace. It was the British who were pushing him, said Zubati, and involving the Iraqis too, because the Iraqis had refused to sign a treaty and the British therefore wanted to send them to the front so that they would be beaten and brought

to their knees. Even Abdullah's eldest son Talal, who was more radical than his father, was according to Zubati opposed to this war and regarded defeat as a foregone conclusion.

Zubati promised to continue his efforts to persuade Abdullah. But in Mrs Meir's judgement, Abdullah was so deeply involved that he was unable to retreat. In a previous conversation Abdullah had said that he had informed the Arabs that unless they put him in charge he would not touch the Palestine affair. Now he had apparently got what he wanted. Nevertheless, Mrs Meir had the feeling that he was afraid of his partners and possibly of the British as well. She thought he was well aware of his predicament in relation to the Arabs and Britain. She gained the distinct impression that he was not going forward with any great joy but because he was caught up in a web and did not know how to extricate himself.

It was nearly midnight when Mrs Meir and her escort set off on the long journey back to Naharayim. On the way they saw the Iraqi force with its field artillery and heavy equipment massing in Mafraq. The journey could have easily ended in disaster because the car driver lost his nerve and dropped his passengers a couple of miles short of their destination, leaving them to complete the trip on foot. But by around 3 o'clock in the morning they staggered into Daskal's house, and from there Mrs Meir proceeded directly to Tel Aviv to report the failure of her mission and the inevitability of invasion.

Birth amidst the flames

After the hazardous journey back from Amman, Mrs Meir proceeded from Naharayim directly to the Mapai headquarters in Tel Aviv where a meeting of the party's central committee was in session. To Ben-Gurion who had been anxiously awaiting her return she scribbled a note: 'We met amicably. He is very worried and looks distraught. He did not deny that there had been talks and understanding between us about a desirable arrangement, namely, that he would take the Arab part, but now he is only one among five. This is the plan he proposed—a unitary state with

autonomy for the Jewish parts, and after one year this would be one country under his rule.'

If Ben-Gurion had any shred of a hope left that Transjordan would stay out of the war, this note destroyed it finally and irrevocably. The conclusion he drew was instantaneous and unequivocal. He walked out of the meeting, rushed to the Haganah headquarters, summoned Israel Galili, the head of the National Command, and Yigael Yadin, the acting chief of staff, and demanded that they prepare all their units to advance, press on with the recapture of the road to Jerusalem and the Arab enclaves in Jewish areas, and prepare a plan to meet a general Arab invasion.

Yadin wanted to know whether they would still be bound by the partition borders if the Arabs launched a general invasion in disregard of these borders. Should they fight Abdullah if he crossed the borders of mandatory Palestine or only if he crossed the borders of the Jewish state? He also wanted to know with regard to Beersheba, which was included in the Arab state, whether they should try and capture it immediately or not. Ben-Gurion's reply was evasive: only the Provisional State Council could decide. To Gen. David Shaltiel, the Haganah commander in Jerusalem, wanting to mount an offensive at the end of the mandate, Ben-Gurion replied that this too was a political question. It was clear that they had to attack along the entire front on zero day but Jerusalem was a special case; an attack there was liable to antagonize the Christian world. In the evening, at another meeting to discuss the anticipated invasion, Yadin once more raised the key question: when and where should they meet Abdullah's forces—only inside their own state, anywhere in Palestine, or perhaps in Transjordan? Once again, however, Ben-Gurion declined to commit himself to a particular line of policy in advance of the meeting of the State Council.

Ben-Gurion's belief in the inevitability of a full-scale invasion of Palestine spearheaded by Transjordan seemed to be confirmed when Arab Legion detachments opened an all out attack with armoured cars and cannons on the Jewish settlement of Kfar Etzion on the morning of May 12. Such a ferocious attack aimed

at destroying a Jewish settlement could not indeed be reconciled either with Abdullah's earlier protestations of friendship or Glubb's professed interest in avoiding serious fighting. A number of factors, however, should be recalled to help place the attack in its proper political context. First and foremost, the Etzion bloc with its four Jewish settlements astride the Jerusalem–Hebron road was in the middle of a purely Arab area and had been assigned to the Arab state by the United Nations. Secondly, on orders from above, the soldiers and settlers of Kfar Etzion had ambushed passing vehicles and cut the road to stop the Arab Legion reinforcements from reaching Jerusalem during the Palmach offensive in Katamon. Thirdly, despite their proximity to the Legion's supply line from the Suez Canal zone to Amman, Glubb had no wish to tangle with the Jewish forces in Kfar Etzion and had even called off an earlier attack led by Abdullah al-Tall on May 4, ordering him to return to base. Vowing to liquidate this troublesome Jewish enclave, Major Tall secretly ordered a subordinate to provoke a clash with Kfar Etzion and appeal to the commander of the Legion for help. On May 12 Tall received the expected call from Glubb to rush reinforcements to the unit which was falsely reported to have been trapped in a Jewish ambush; he personally led the column which crushed the four Jewish settlements, inflicted heavy casualties, and took 350 prisoners to Amman. For all these reasons it is misleading to regard the attack on the Etzion bloc as part of a premeditated plan on the part of either the king or Glubb Pasha to engage the Jewish forces in battle before the expiry of the British mandate over Palestine.

News of the fall of the Etzion bloc reached Ben-Gurion in the middle of a crucial meeting of the State Council which was called upon to decide whether to accept the eleventh-hour American proposal for a truce and postpone the declaration of independence or carry out the original plan of proclaiming the establishment of a Jewish state despite all the dangers, uncertainties, and international pressures. It was at this meeting that Golda Meir reported on her talk with King Abdullah. Yadin and Galili presented a rather pessimistic appraisal of the military situation and warned that the chances of victory and defeat were equally

balanced. Yadin's estimate that the Yishuv had only a 50–50 chance of survival was based on the assumption that the Yishuv would have to withstand an attack by all the Arab armies, including the Arab Legion. He totally discounted any possibility that the legion would stay out of the war. He did not even know, he was later to claim, that there were political contacts with Transjordan. The fact that Ben-Gurion did not tell him about these contacts was in Yadin's view conclusive proof that Ben-Gurion himself did not believe that there was any possibility of an understanding with Abdullah. Such an understanding would have had important operational implications and Ben-Gurion therefore would have been bound to inform Yadin. In actual fact they did not even discuss this possibility. According to Yadin, Ben-Gurion's estimate was that the clash with the Legion was inescapable.

Ben-Gurion was absolutely convinced that they should proclaim independence without delay lest they miss a historic opportunity but he had the problem of convincing the waverers on the State Council. The real question, as he formulated it, was whether they had a realistic chance of resisting invasion and his assessment was that they had every prospect of success. The Etzion disaster did not shake Ben-Gurion's confidence. 'I expected such reverses', he said, 'and I fear we shall have even greater ordeals. The matter will be settled when we destroy the greater part of the Arab Legion. Then they will fall. Destruction of the enemy forces is always the determining factor in war, not the occupation of this or that point.' Ben-Gurion also argued that the attack on the Etzion bloc constituted an invasion and made the question of a truce largely academic. When the vote was taken on whether to accept the truce, six voted against and four voted for. Sharett cast the deciding vote in favour of proclaiming the establishment of a Jewish state. It was also decided, following Ben-Gurion's strongly expressed preference, not to indicate the borders of the new state in the declaration of independence so as to leave open the possibility of expansion beyond the United Nations borders. The name of the new state was to be Israel.

Once the historic decision had been made, attention shifted

towards the operational problems of repulsing the anticipated Arab invasion. First there was a question of whether to attack the Arab Legion detachments on their way back from the Etzion bloc. The military experts were fairly evenly divided into those who favoured such an attack and those who thought it would be too risky. Ben-Gurion argued that it would be a fatal mistake to allow the Legion to leave the country or to roam freely inside it, especially as it could endanger the Jewish position in Jerusalem, and it was agreed to launch an attack from Jerusalem if adequate reinforcements could be mobilized.

At four o'clock in the afternoon of May 14 Ben-Gurion read out the Declaration of Independence and proclaimed the establishment of the State of Israel. 'Its fate', he wrote laconically in his diary, 'is in the hands of the defence forces.' The fundamental differences between Ben-Gurion and the chiefs of the defence forces on the strategy to be adopted for dealing with the invasion persisted. Ben-Gurion pressed for an offensive strategy to capture various areas round the Tel Aviv–Jerusalem road in order to secure Israel's hold on Jerusalem. But he met with resistance from the General Staff on the grounds that they did not have sufficient strength to dislodge the Transjordanian forces and did not know the enemy's plans. Whereas the General Staff saw the southern front as the critical one, Ben-Gurion was convinced that it was the Jerusalem front that might well determine the result of the entire campaign. He saw the battle for Jerusalem as central to the broader fight for independence.

On Jerusalem there was certainly no understanding with Transjordan, nor had the subject been raised by Golda Meir at her first or second meeting with Abdullah. Under the UN plan Jerusalem was to be an international zone so there was no compelling reason to try and reach an understanding. Each side kept its thoughts and its hopes to itself. But with the collapse of the secret plan for a peaceful partition, the future of Jerusalem became a burning concern to both sides. Because he considered Jerusalem to be so vital to the Yishuv's prospects of surviving the Arab invasion, Ben-Gurion pressed for concentrating massive resources there, even at the cost of exposing the other fronts. He got his way.

About a third of their forces were deployed in and around Jerusalem. On May 15, they in fact called up troops from the south for the battles in Latrun, to wrench control of the north-eastern approaches to Jerusalem from the Arab Legion.

The Arab drift to war

While the Jews were planning their struggle for survival, the Arabs were assailed by last-minute doubts that gave rise to strange and contradictory behaviour. If the picture on the Jewish side of the hill was one of grim determination, on the other side it was one of utter confusion, confounded by deception and self-deception in roughly equal measure. King Abdullah realistically estimated the balance of forces but in his public appearances he felt constrained to toe the general Arab line. He even escalated the war of words by making increasingly militant public statements which were taken at face value by the Jewish Agency. To a large extent this militancy was inspired by universal Arab clamour for immediate military action and by the appeals for help from the Palestinian Arabs. But to some extent Abdullah was the victim of his own rhetoric. He came to see himself as the protector of the Palestine Arabs and was overcome by a sense of mission to uphold Arab honour by meeting the Zionist challenge head-on. If he were to evade the challenge, to disappoint the widespread hopes that had come to rest on him personally, he was sure to be denounced as a traitor and might end up by losing his throne. The risks of resorting to military action to defend Arab land and honour were great but the risks of inaction seemed scarcely less so.

Arab pressures on King Abdullah to fight the Jews were mounting at an alarming pace. The centre of gravity of Arab policy in Palestine had shifted decisively from the Palestine Arabs under the mufti of Jerusalem to the Arab states loosely gathered in the League under the leadership of an Egyptian secretary-general. On May 12, Abdullah's foreign minister returned from Cairo with a message from King Farouk promising Egyptian intervention in Palestine after the end of the mandate and

offering to send Egyptian staff officers to Amman to co-ordinate a plan. This message temporarily dispelled Abdullah's caution and the politicians in Amman started wildly discussing plans for action after the end of the mandate.

This message from Cairo amounted to a reversal of Egypt's and the Arab League's decision not to send regular armies into Palestine but confine themselves to concentrating troops on the border and extending help to the Arab Liberation Army and Palestinian guerrilla forces. King Farouk personally took this decision which upset the Arab League's strategic consensus and forced the other Arab states to follow suit by sending their regular armies into Palestine. The decision arose out of a growing realization that King Abdullah was determined to send his army into Palestine at the end of the mandate whether the Arab states agreed or resisted, and whether they participated in the invasion or remained on the sidelines. It was also clear to the Egyptian and the other Arab leaders that whatever the reason given for the entry of the Arab Legion into Palestine, the ultimate intention would be to obtain new territory for King Abdullah. Many suspected that Abdullah would not try to conquer the whole of Palestine by force of arms but would try to reach—and had perhaps already reached—an agreement with the Jews for sharing the spoils. Here lies one of the principal reasons for the reversal of Egypt's earlier stand and the decision taken against the advice of the military experts to send the Egyptian army into Palestine. An invasion by Abdullah and the partition of Palestine between him and the emergent Jewish state, regardless of whether accomplished peacefully or as a result of armed conflict, would have dealt a death blow to the vision of Arab unity, to Egypt's hegemonial aspirations, and to Egypt's prestige in the Islamic world. A desire to prevent a unilateral invasion and the conquest and annexation of Palestine was accordingly one of Egypt's primary war aims and a major factor in forcing her government to decide at the last minute on the dispatch of the Egyptian army to Palestine.

Azzam Pasha had his own suspicions that the imminent redeployment of the Arab Legion in Palestine was intended to serve Abdullah's private interests rather than pan-Arab ones. On

May 13, Azzam arrived in Amman to see if the Transjordanian authorities could be induced to play the part assigned to them by the Arab League planners. He informed the authorities that the Arab League had decided to fight and that the Egyptian army would invade Palestine. 'This announcement', Glubb was later to claim, 'destroyed King Abdullah's plan of an agreement with the Jewish state on the lines of the partition plan.'

In the course of discussions with Glubb Pasha it emerged that the secretary-general's concept of war was hopelessly naïve and impractical. Glubb could not be impressed by the fact that the Arab League had decided to fight without even asking how many men they had and how many constituted the enemy. According to him the forces engaged by the Arab League comprised 10,000 soldiers from Egypt, 4,500 Arab Legion troops, and 3,000 each from Syria and Iraq, giving a total of 20,500. The enemy forces were estimated by Glubb at 60,000, or roughly twice their actual strength.

Azzam surprised Glubb even more by offering him the post of commander-in-chief of all the Arab armies in Palestine. Both Glubb and Kirkbride were convinced that the offer was made in bad faith and that none of the other Arab governments would consent to place their troops under the command of a British officer, even if he was technically the servant of the Transjordanian government. They suspected that the hidden idea behind the offer was to prepare a scapegoat for future failures. A British commander-in-chief could be disregarded if the operations went well but would provide a ready-made scapegoat if the war ended in defeat. Anyway, Glubb politely declined the honour. The only positive result of Azzam's visit was the payment of a sum of £250,000 to the Transjordanian government out of an Arab League war chest of nearly £4 million. Azzam presented the payment as the first instalment of a larger sum of up to £3 million from the same source, but in the event he did not honour the promise to pay the balance. Having been rebuffed when he asked the Transjordanian prime minister for supplementary financial allocations to meet the cost of fighting a war, Glubb was obviously grateful for small mercies.

Azzam's extraordinary conduct reflected the inability of the

Arab League to choose between war and its sacrifices or peace and its compromises. The utterly irresponsible and unprofessional manner in which Azzam approached the conflict over Palestine emerged again during his meeting with Kirkbride. When they had met five days earlier his mood had been more subdued and he had said that it was necessary to do something to re-establish the prestige of the Arab world and to bring the Jews to a reasonable state of mind after which the negotiation of a settlement might be possible. He even hinted that a reduced Jewish state might be accepted if it took the form of an act of generosity on the part of the Arabs after they had re-established their position. This was a remarkable change from the earlier objective of occupying the whole of Palestine and making it an independent Arab state.

Now, however, after much havering, Azzam stood up, struck a pose and said dramatically: 'It is my duty to announce to you the intention of the Arab armies to march into Palestine tomorrow at midnight.' Kirkbride retorted that the news did not surprise him. Azzam went on to enumerate the strengths of the various Arab armies available for the invasion; when asked for the size of the Jewish forces, he waved his hands and said: 'It does not matter how many there are. We will sweep them into the sea.' On being told that when considering a military problem it was normal to take into account the courses open to the enemy as well as those open to oneself, Azzam became peevish and the meeting ended on a frosty note. To Kirkbride Azzam seemed to be suffering from acute anxiety, though in public, like other Arab politicians, he affected to be utterly confident about the outcome of the pending conflict.

To Kirkbride's dismay, Transjordanian politicians were also infected by the sudden surge of Arab war psychosis. He experienced a feeling of helpless horror in much the same way as a bystander watching an impending motor accident knows he can do nothing to prevent it. King Abdullah was thrown off-balance by the cacophony of Arab voices clamouring for the liberation of Palestine. Even the sensible and level-headed prime minister, who rarely took a step unless it had the blessing of the British,

appeared to throw all caution to the winds and to be resigned to letting events take their own course.

On May 15, the day after the mandate ended, Kirkbride reported to London that for no better reason than that which existed for the recent collapse of morale, the Arabs were now full of optimism and in no mood to listen to advice. 'A reverse in the operations now being undertaken by the regular Arab armies would doubtless dispel this feeling in a matter of hours and advantage should be taken of such an occasion to preach moderation. The present is not the moment.' In an informal talk with Abul Huda, Kirkbride warned him that if Transjordan went beyond the plan regarding the Arab areas of Palestine, His Majesty's government would have to reconsider their subsidy and the loan of British officers to the Arab Legion. Abul Huda gave him an opening by forecasting total Jewish defeat within a fortnight.

Abul Huda took the warning in good part and said that while he and the king adhered basically to their original intentions, it would be impossible for Transjordan to stop at the frontier of the Jewish state if the other Arab armies were sweeping all before them. In such an event (which Kirkbride interposed was unlikely) Abul Huda promised he would spare them the embarrassment by releasing the British officers concerned beforehand. If the subsidy was withheld, Transjordan would just have to beg for funds from the other Arab states.

A few minutes before midnight, 14–15 May, King Abdullah dispatched the Arab Legion across the Jordan. The king and members of his personal staff stood at the eastern end of the Allenby Bridge waiting for the mandate to expire officially. At twelve o'clock precisely the king drew his revolver, fired a symbolical shot into the air and shouted the word, 'forward'.

As the troops marched into Palestine, the politicians of the Arab League continued their backstage manœuvres, labyrinthine intrigues, and sordid attempts to stab each other in the back—all in the name of the highest pan-Arab ideals. Politics did not end when war started but were inextricably mixed with it from the moment the first shot was fired until the guns finally fell silent and

beyond. On May 15 an event took place which presaged much of what was to follow and exposed the lengths to which Arab politicians were prepared to go in their attempts to outwit their partners. King Abdullah, whose own skills lay decidedly in the realm of politics rather than that of warfare, received a phone call from Damascus. The conversation which ensued is described by the king in his memoirs:

Damascus called Amman, saying that it was doing so because of certain thoughts which President al-Quwwalti (who at the time was being visited by Arab League Secretary General Azzam Pasha) wished to express. The message referred to the necessity of refraining from advancing into Palestine and of providing the Palestinians with all possible arms and funds, and promised that if the Arab uprising actually got under way and needed effective assistance such aid would then be given.

Because of Azzam Pasha's presence in Damascus I was not sure at the time whether this really had been suggested to Damascus by Egypt or whether it was due to some distrust of me which had arisen in their minds and aroused a desire to discover my true intentions. At any rate, it was a moment that touched my soul with apprehension and anxiety, for the Arab Legion was engaged in a violent struggle for Jerusalem and had advanced to the coastal plain in the vicinity of Bab al-Wad, Lydda, and al-Ramlah on one hand, and Tulkarm and al-Affulah on the other. My answer was a flat rejection of this strange proposal and I requested to speak to the Secretary General of the League himself, who protested that my suspicions were entirely unfounded. They naturally agreed with me immediately as to the necessity of persevering in our course, but added by way of excuse that the state of preparation did not permit assistance to other fronts.

The die was cast. It was too late for second thoughts. Once the invasion had been set in motion, it could not be reversed by a mere telephone call from one Arab capital to another. If King Abdullah's relations with his fellow Arab leaders had sunk to one of their lowest points, his contact with the Jewish Agency had been severed altogether. At this critical juncture when Britain was finally departing from Palestine, the secret agreement which Abdullah had concluded with Ernest Bevin through the good offices of his Palestinian-born prime minister seemed at the point

of being overwhelmed by the momentum of the invasion and by the popular Arab clamour for doing battle with the Zionists and liberating the whole of Palestine.

The Jews were in a similarly truculent and uncompromising mood; they had proclaimed their independent state and they were determined to fight for it, come what may. It was an ultimatum that Mrs Meir had gone to give King Abdullah, not sympathy or help in overcoming his inter-Arab problems. The key question now was whether the king would stop his army at the border of the Jewish state or disregard this border, but no one knew the answer to this question, possibly not even the king himself.

The Hashemite–Zionist accord, which had been thirty years in the making, looked on the verge of dissolving in the heat of the battle that was about to begin. Five Arab armies were on the move, dashing the hope of the peaceful partition of Palestine that lay at the heart of that accord. Popular sentiment throughout the Arab world proved more powerful than either the assurances conveyed to Mr Bevin or the royal promises that had earlier been expressed to Mrs Meir. As the soldiers took charge on both sides, the prospects for salvaging anything from the ruins of the Hashemite–Zionist accord looked at best uncertain.

8

The Invasion

The battle for Jerusalem, May 1948

Jerusalem was the principal battleground and the most coveted prize in the 1948 Arab–Israeli war. The Holy City was of profound spiritual and religious importance to Muslims, Jews, and Christians throughout the world. It was also the strategic key to the whole of Palestine, being perched on the mountain ridge at the junction of the main roads from Tel Aviv to Jericho and from Nablus to Hebron. The future of Jerusalem was therefore uppermost in the minds of both Ben-Gurion and Abdullah as their armies went into battle.

Under the United Nations partition plan, Jerusalem was to be an enclave under an international regime inside the Arab state, a separate body or *corpus separatum*. If the Jewish Agency or the Transjordanian government had objections to this plan, they failed to communicate them to the United Nations. Both behaved as if they accepted the plan to internationalize Jerusalem. In the unwritten agreement between the Jewish Agency and King Abdullah there were no provisions for Jerusalem. The king undertook not to interfere with the establishment of a Jewish state within the partition borders while the Jews undertook not to interfere with his invasion into the Arab parts of Palestine. Jerusalem was not even mentioned in the talks because it was tacitly assumed that it would constitute a separate enclave under an international regime. The fighting broke out in Jerusalem precisely because it was not covered by any kind of agreement or understanding between the two sides. Everywhere else, as we shall see, the Arab Legion respected the partition borders and made no attempt to seize Jewish territory.

Glubb's original plan for the deployment of his four regiments

in Palestine did not cater for the occupation or even the defence of Jerusalem. As he later explained.

> The Arab Legion had crossed the Jordan on May 15, with the approval of the British government, to help the Arabs defend the area of Judaea and Samaria allotted to them. We were strictly forbidden to enter Jerusalem, which had been declared by the United Nations to be an enclave or to enter any area allotted to the Jewish state in the partition plan. Our plans were therefore strictly in accordance with the orders of the United Nations and the approval of the British government.

None of Glubb's own orders to his officers was more categoric than that which warned them against getting involved in fighting in Jerusalem. The wishes of the British government and resolutions of the United Nations were important considerations. The small size of his army in relation to the 260-kilometre front from Hebron to Nablus which he wanted to hold also made Glubb reluctant to assume any additional responsibilities. Moreover, his bedouin soldiers were not trained for town fighting; it was not their natural habitat. Fighting in Jerusalem's narrow lanes and cramped bazaars was likely to be very costly in casualties and Glubb did not want to see his life's work torn apart in street-fighting. Finally, even at this late hour, Glubb had lingering hopes of limiting hostilities to a semblance of war—a few skirmishes, a few token forays, and then allowing the dust to settle. For all these reasons he laid down a strict policy of non-involvement in Jerusalem, leaving the defence of the city to the various bands of Palestinian irregulars.

There was no parallel restraint on the Israeli side. The truce covering Jerusalem was broken immediately the mandate ended. Hardly had the British evacuated the town when a well-planned and vigorous Israeli offensive, Operation Pitchfork, was launched to seize all the Arab and mixed zones of the new city and form a solid Jewish area going all the way up to the Old City walls. Another objective of the operation was to capture the Arab quarter of Shaikh Jarrah and establish a secure link with the Jewish enclave containing the Hadassah Hospital and the Hebrew University on Mount Scopus.

The Jewish Quarter inside the Old City represented a particularly difficult problem for the Israeli command. It occupied an area of 450 by 325 metres and had a non-combatant population of 1,700 and a garrison force of 150 lightly armed men. Surrounded by 20,000 hostile Arabs, this small enclave was virtually indefensible. The Israelis had the option of taking the fighters out and leaving the Jewish Quarter under a Red Cross flag. But David Shaltiel, the commander of the Jerusalem front and a loyal supporter of Ben-Gurion, declined the offer of voluntary evacuation. Instead, he planned to hold on to the Jewish Quarter and use it as a springboard for capturing the entire Old City.

The task was to break through the massive sixteenth-century stone ramparts that enclosed the Old City and effect contact with the forces defending the Jewish Quarter. A first attempt was made on the night of May 16 to break into the Old City through the Jaffa Gate but the attack was repelled by the Arab defenders. A second attempt was made to break in at the same point the following night but this too failed. At the third attempt, on May 19, a Palmach unit succeeded in forcing its way through the Zion Gate and linking up with the Jewish Quarter. But instead of keeping up the offensive to complete the capture of the Old City, as Shaltiel expected, the Palmach handed over to another unit, which relapsed into a static defence of the Jewish Quarter. Such defence was doomed to failure from the start. Daily attempts were made to breach the massive city walls in order to reinforce the beleaguered garrison but on May 28 the Jewish Quarter finally and formally surrendered to the Arab Legion.

The Israeli attempt to capture the Old City triggered off a chain of events that ended up by overturning Glubb's careful policy of non-involvement. The king and his ministers were inundated with desperate appeals for help from the Arabs in the Old City. A National Committee had been elected and entrusted, belatedly, with organizing the defence of Jerusalem in face of the accelerating violence. Anwar Nuseiba, a prominent member of the committee, recalled that 'A delegation was sent to see King Abdullah to tell him that we needed support and we badly needed arms. We were supposed to be the radicals—from Jerusalem, the

seat of the mufti. Abdullah rebuked us for not having listened to his advice. Even then he was concerned to carry Palestinian opinion with him, and seek a solution through means other than violence. Ahmad Hilmi, the leader of Arab Jerusalem, cabled the government in Amman: 'Unless you rescue us immediately, Jerusalem will fall finally into the hands of the Jews.'

Glubb held out against the mounting pressure to commit his troops to the defence of the Old City for as long as he could. He suspected that the likelihood of an imminent fall into Jewish hands was exaggerated and he clung to the hope that the Consular Truce Commission would succeed in its efforts to arrange a cease-fire in Jerusalem.

King Abdullah, whose father was buried in the precincts of the Great Mosque, was torn between carrying out his duty as a Muslim and a Hashemite and going to the rescue on the one hand and displeasing his British allies on the other. As the calls for help from Jerusalem became more frantic, he decided to act. At half past eleven in the morning of May 17, Glubb received the following message: 'His Majesty the King orders an advance towards Jerusalem from the direction of Ramallah. He intends by this action to threaten the Jews, in order that they may accept a truce in Jerusalem.'

Half an hour later Glubb received another and longer telegram from the defence minister. It read as follows:

His Majesty the King is extremely anxious and indeed insists that a force from Ramallah with artillery be sent to attack the Jewish quarters of Jerusalem. The Jews are attacking the gates of the Old City in order to break into it. An attack on the Jews would ease the pressure on the Arabs and would incline the Jews to accept the truce for Jerusalem. The Belgian consul has been here and His Majesty has gathered from him that such action on our part might frighten the Jews and make them less obstinate. His Majesty is awaiting swift action. Report quickly that the operation has commenced.

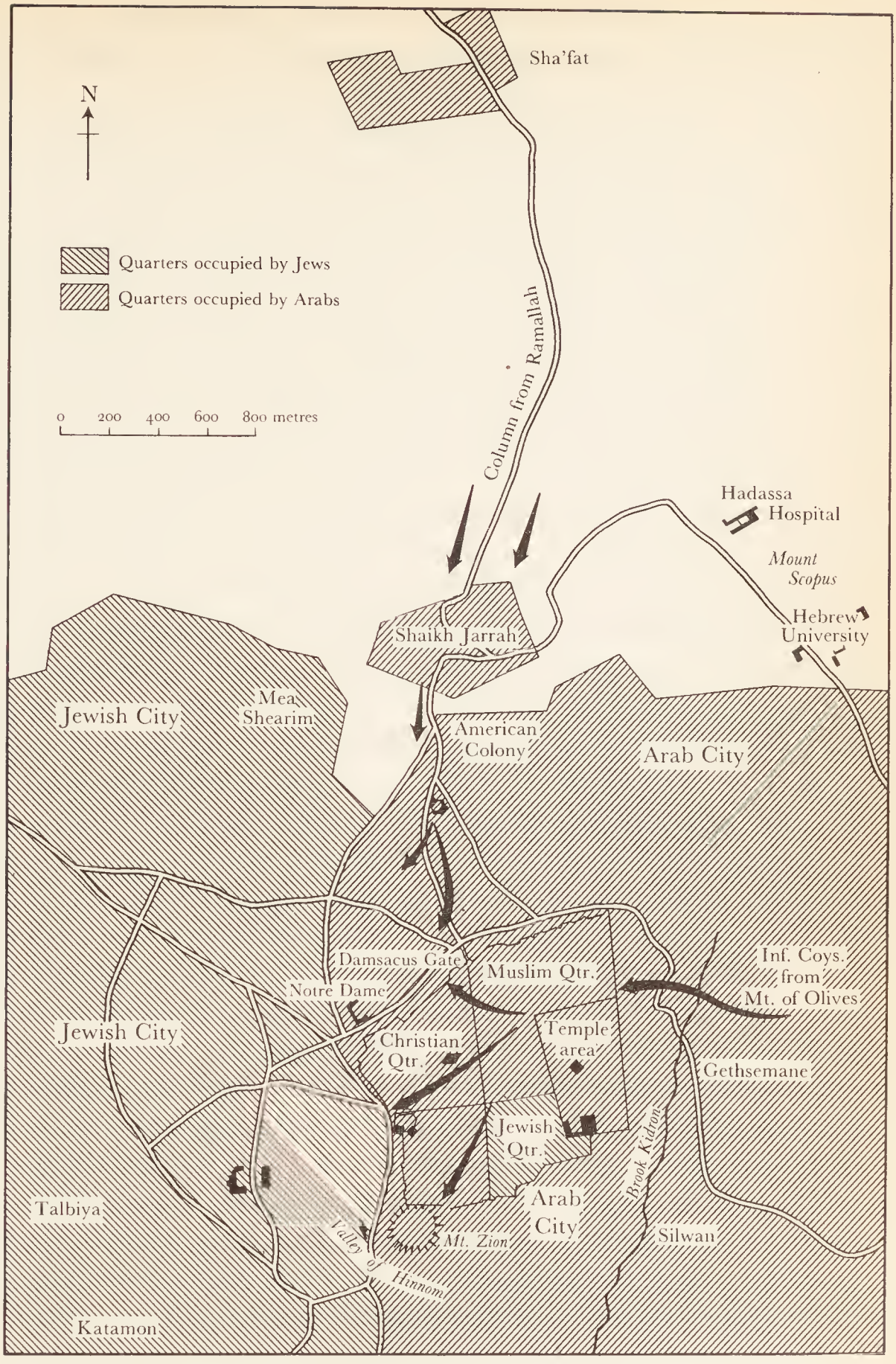
The king realized that he had embarked on an enterprise that could carry him beyond the original scheme for which he had secured Bevin's agreement. To limit the damage to his relations

with Britain, he followed up his orders to Glubb with a letter of explanation to Kirkbride. Kirkbride proposed to tell him that any departure from the original scheme would necessitate a reconsideration of Britain's own position, but by the time Kirkbride received instructions from London to warn Abdullah against a full-scale Arab Legion attack on Jerusalem, the die was cast.

The king's unusually insistent orders to Glubb could not be lightly ignored. For 48 hours Glubb had been opposing both the king and the government for reasons that were partly political and partly military. Now the situation had become too critical to permit any further delay. On May 18 Glubb gave the orders to an infantry company of about 100 men stationed on the Mount of Olives to go into the Old City. The following day, to prevent the Old City being cut off, Glubb ordered a force of 300 men to break into Jerusalem from the north, clear Shaikh Jarrah, and establish contact with the Old City (see Map 6). There were also political reasons for Glubb's decision to intervene in Jerusalem, as Kirkbride noted in his report to London:

> Glubb had the choice of turning outwards on an operation which might ultimately lead him into a Jewish area or inwards to relieve the Arab areas of Jerusalem. He chose the latter, I think wisely. To have saved the Holy Places of Jerusalem would give Transjordan great merit in the Arab world and the troops can be given the battle for which they are clamouring without the risk of being involved in what might be described as an act of aggression against the Jewish state.

The Arab Legion's effective intervention to save the Old City raised Abdullah's prestige in the Arab world but it also exposed him to growing pressure to nullify the partition plan. At a meeting of Arab statesmen and military commanders at Deraa, in southern Syria, on May 19, it soon became clear to Abdullah that the real purpose of his allies was to involve the Arab Legion still further, and in particular to get it to move against the Jewish state. Lieut. Gen. Taha al-Hashimi, the head of the Arab League's Military Committee, touched off an explosion of royal wrath by insisting that the Arab armies should not be used for political purposes. The king retorted that after the deplorable



Map 6 Entry of the Arab Legion into Jerusalem

shows put up by the Syrian and Lebanese forces they were in no position to criticize the Arab Legion, and that no one with any sense would propose attacking the Jewish state.

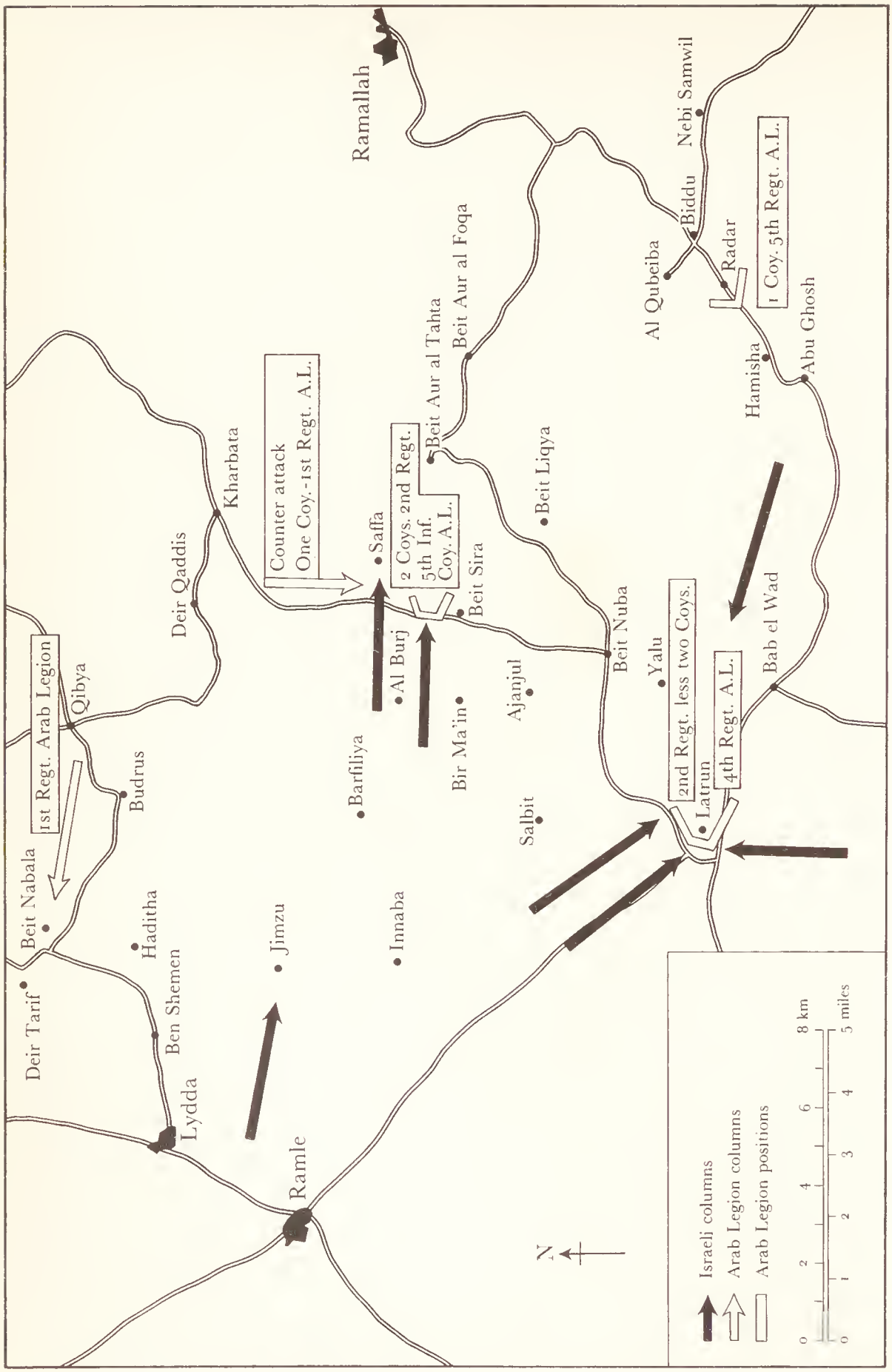
President al-Quwatli of Syria demanded that they implement the Arab League plan for the Syrian army to move through Bennt Jbail in southern Lebanon towards Nazareth and from there to capture Afuleh in order to link up with the Iraqi army in Jenin and cut off the Jewish settlements in the Jordan Valley. Abdullah, however, was opposed to this plan and insisted that the Syrian army should move westward through Samakh towards Tiberias. This was the route that the Syrian army took, but after capturing Samakh it was stopped in Degania and in effect lost the battle for the Jordan Valley. Of his nephew, Abd al-Illah, the regent of Iraq, Abdullah asked that the Iraqi forces be moved into Samaria in order to defend the new Hashemite conquests and relieve the Arab Legion for other missions in the Jerusalem area.

The Jewish offensive in Jerusalem having been halted, the focal point of the battle moved to Latrun, a hill spur with fortifications that dominated the main route from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. That road was the lifeline of Jerusalem's 100,000 Jews, and Latrun was its most vulnerable point. From this towering position the New City—Jewish Jerusalem—could be blockaded and its population starved into submission. Yet despite the immense strategic importance of Latrun, Qawukji's troops withdrew on May 15 without handing it over properly or even notifying the Arab Legion. Because of poor intelligence and the need to transfer forces to the Negev to deal with the invading Egyptian forces, the Israeli command made no attempt to move into the positions vacated by the Arab Liberation Army. Thus Latrun remained unmanned by either side for three days until Glubb ordered the 4th Regiment to occupy it; only with the arrival of the Iraqi troops to the Nablus–Jenin–Tulkarem triangle could the 4th Regiment be spared to assume this vital mission on the road to Jerusalem.

The deployment of the 4th Regiment in Latrun was typical of Glubb's entire strategy. Having only four infantry regiments at his disposal, no strategic reserves, and little prospect of recruiting and training additional reinforcements, he opted for a defensive

deployment of his forces in key Arab areas. His objective was to gain control over the Arab areas of Palestine in order to prevent their capture by the Israelis and ultimately to annex them to Transjordan. This defensive strategy was contrary to the Arab League's plan but it accorded with Britain's preferences and Abdullah's territorial ambitions. Latrun was well within the zone allotted to the Arabs so the Transjordanian occupation of it could be regarded as legitimate. Whereas a direct attack to conquer the New City of Jerusalem would have constituted a violation of the UN plan, blockading it from inside Arab territory did not. Glubb did not occupy Latrun in order to expand westward into Jewish territory although it was potentially a good springboard for attack. Had he wanted to break through the lines of the new state an even better route would have been from Kalkilya to Kfar Saba, 40 kilometres north of Latrun. But he made no attempt to expand. His order to the 4th Regiment was to do nothing to disturb the peace, but be prepared to repel an Israeli attack.

The bloody battles fought in Latrun were not the result of offensive operations by the Legion but of Israeli attempts to capture it so as to break the stranglehold on Jerusalem. Ben-Gurion was determined to meet the challenge head-on because to his way of thinking the fate of Jerusalem and therefore the fate of the entire state hung in the balance. Fearing that Jerusalem might fall or that the United Nations would impose a truce before the siege was broken, he pressed remorselessly for an immediate frontal attack on Latrun. Yadin wanted time to prepare his forces and presented an ingenious plan based on Liddell Hart's strategy of the indirect approach but he was overruled. Three frontal attacks were mounted on Latrun, all of which failed (see Map 7). Shlomo Shamir's hastily improvised 7th Brigade was badly mauled in the process. The Arab Legion beat off all the attacks, inflicted very heavy casualties on the attacking forces and retained control of the battlefield throughout. Shamir must have regretted that there was no follow up to his meeting with Colonel Goldie and that his own side did not take more seriously Glubb's offer to keep out of each other's way or fight only mock battles. But it was too late for second thoughts. Having failed to dislodge



Map 7 Abortive Israeli offensive against Latrun

the Arab Legion from its heavily fortified position at Latrun he improvised an alternative route to Jerusalem—the so-called Burma Road which was completed just before the United Nations truce put an end to the first round of fighting.

Proposals for a cease-fire

During the first round of fighting Britain took steps to ensure that the Arab Legion would indeed remain on the defensive and began to exert the strongest possible pressure on the Arab leaders to accept the cease-fire resolution that Britain tabled before the Security Council. King Abdullah was reminded of the assurances he had sent with Abul Huda to enter only the Arab parts of Palestine and not to cause difficulties for Britain by getting involved in large-scale hostilities. Now that the stated objectives had been achieved and the Muslim Holy Places in Jerusalem had been protected, there was nothing to be lost by agreeing to a cease-fire. Refusal by King Abdullah would imply that he had other objectives in mind, in which case the British government would be forced to reconsider her entire position with regard to the Arab Legion. Faced with this thinly veiled threat, Abdullah not only agreed but promised to do his best to get the other Arab leaders to accept the British-sponsored cease-fire.

When the Arab League's Political Committee met in Amman on May 25, there was strong resistance from the Egyptian and Syrian representatives to the cease-fire proposal. Acceptance of a cease-fire was thought to signify an admission of defeat for which the Arab public, fed with false accounts of Arab military successes, was totally unprepared. Only Abul Huda spoke in favour of the British proposal and threatened that the Arab Legion would not continue to carry the main burden if the fighting continued. In the end the committee rejected the Security Council's request that both sides should observe a cease-fire order but asked the council to make new proposals for a solution to the Palestine problem. For Transjordan to accept the cease-fire alone would have been too risky. Politically Abul Huda could not

survive such an action, nor could the Hashemites in either Iraq or Transjordan.

Having had its first resolution turned down by the Arab League, Britain put before the Security Council another resolution which called for a cessation of all acts of armed force for a period of four weeks, with a ban on the introduction of fighting men and war material into Palestine. Indirectly this resolution carried the threat of sanctions against the Arab states. Like the withdrawal of the British officers, however, it was a hollow gesture designed to restore Britain's credibility in the eyes of the United Nations. The Cabinet noted that compliance with the embargo on the movement of war material might involve some breach of Britain's contracts for the supply of arms to the Arab states, but Bevin assured his colleagues that there was no intention of modifying Britain's long-term obligations under the treaty of alliance with Transjordan. The Security Council adopted the British resolution on May 29 and the task of implementing it was entrusted to the United Nations mediator for Palestine, Count Folke Bernadotte of Sweden.

British thinking proceeded on the assumption that the Arab governments would in fact prefer not to set up a separate Arab state in Palestine but to appropriate the Arab areas to themselves. The British expected Transjordan to annex the central Arab area and hoped that Egypt and Transjordan would share the Negev between them, even if it meant that the western Galilee would have to be ceded to the Jewish state in compensation for the loss of the Negev. An arrangement along these lines, it was believed, would create a strong barrier against Jewish and communist expansion south and would provide Britain with an extended area of friendly Arab country in which she would have strategic facilities, whereas a separate Arab state in Palestine would be so small and weak that it might well succumb at some stage to Jewish pressure. Before putting these ideas to Bernadotte, Bevin wanted Kirkbride to have a frank discussion with Abdullah.

A preliminary discussion with the prime minister revealed that the Egyptian government, probably at the insistence of the mufti, had recently put forward a suggestion that the Arabs set up and

recognize a unitary state over the whole of Palestine. This suggestion was opposed by Transjordan and Iraq, and it was decided to maintain the original decision of the Arab League that whatever part of Palestine was rescued should be placed under military rule until its inhabitants were in a position to choose their future status for themselves. Abul Huda felt that any other decision would have provoked a dispute between the Arab states while they were still in combat with the Jews. This dispute was bound to arise later, but he was confident that by then the inhabitants in the areas controlled by the Legion would be unanimous in asking for union with Transjordan. Steps to secure that were being taken. Abul Huda personally saw no objection to Egypt acquiring the Negev provided Transjordan acquired access to the sea in the Gaza area. But he urged Kirkbride not to suggest any other course of action to King Abdullah so as to avoid creating an open breach among the Arab states at a critical time.

Count Bernadotte flew to the Middle East at the end of May and worked tirelessly to secure a cease-fire. King Abdullah informed him that his country would accept the cease-fire. The Political Committee of the Arab League reconvened in Amman to discuss the latest proposals. Egypt and Transjordan pressed for acceptance and were soon joined by Iraq. Syria, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia were more difficult to convince because of their concern for local public opinion, but they finally voted for acceptance. After adopting this resolution, the Syrian, Lebanese, and Saudi Arabian delegates proposed an additional resolution stating that all Arab states rejected a Jewish state and that anybody entertaining contrary ideas was a traitor to the Arab cause. Tawfiq Abul Huda told the three delegates that this matter was entirely outside the scope of the meeting and that the proposed resolution was a direct attack on the Hashemites. He abruptly declared the meeting closed and walked out.

An American official confirmed that there was a widespread desire in Amman to see an end to the war if an honourable way out could be found for Transjordan. King Abdullah told him that he did not hate the Jews, that he had never wished to make a war on them, that it had been forced on him by the Arab League and

that he would be glad to see it come to an end. Sharif Husayn Nasser, Abdullah's son-in-law and chief of the royal court, told the American official that the king realized the strength of the Jews and did not wish to risk losing his army as this would undermine his strong position *vis-à-vis* the other Arab states. Sharif Nasser spoke almost pleadingly for a solution that would save the king's honour. Further talks with the prime minister, the foreign minister, Kirkbride, Glubb, and others in and out of the government revealed a consensus of opinion that the war had gone on long enough, that it could not possibly end in victory for the Arabs, and that time worked in favour of the Jews. Various persons pointed out that the Arab Legion had not yet attempted any large-scale operation against the Jews in Jewish territory. The operation in Jerusalem was relatively small and limited. Operations in Latrun had resulted in no gains by either side, although the Tel Aviv–Jerusalem road remained closed. British officers in the Arab Legion appeared to be proceeding very cautiously to avoid any major engagement with the Jews.

The battle for the Triangle, June 1948

While British officers were holding back the Transjordanian forces in the Jerusalem front and British diplomats were pressing for an Arab acceptance of a cease-fire, a major battle was fought in Samaria between the Hashemite army of Iraq and the Israeli army. The battle was for control of the Triangle defined by the large Arab cities of Jenin in the north, Nablus in the east, and Tulkarem in the west. From this hilly area an attack launched in the direction of the Mediterranean could cut the State of Israel in two. To the Israeli military planners, this seemed to be the objective of the Iraqi expeditionary force which advanced along the Tulkarem–Natanya road to within only ten kilometres off the Mediterranean coast.

To defend Israel's narrow waistline, the Israeli Command ordered its first large-scale offensive operation of the war. The plan called for a co-ordinated attack by the Golani and Carmeli brigades on the northern flank of the Iraqi army in Jenin and a

diversionary attack to be mounted on Tulkarem from the south by the Alexandroni Brigade. Between June 1 and 3, Moshe Carmel, the commander of the northern front, staged an attack which led to the capture of Jenin, but the Alexandroni Brigade, commanded by Gen. Dan Even, unaccountably failed to mount the attack on Tulkarem. All the power of the Iraqi forces was then turned against the northern spearhead which suffered heavy casualties and was forced to withdraw from Jenin. The two-pronged Israeli strategy thus failed to make a dent in the Arab positions overlooking the coastal plain. A major opportunity to widen Israel's narrow waist was lost.

On the Arab side there was also a feeling that an opportunity had been missed. According to the Iraqi chief of staff, Salih Saib al-Juburi, it was the failure of the Arab Legion to carry out the mission assigned to it in the overall Arab invasion plan that exposed his own army to attacks from the Israelis and prevented it from achieving its aims. Although there was one headquarters for all the invading armies, headed by an Iraqi general, Nur al-Din Mahmud, it had no effective control over those armies, and the military operations did not follow the agreed plan. Only the Iraqi army, Juburi claims, obeyed the HQ; the Legion acted independently throughout, with terrible results for the general Arab war effort.

On May 14, specific instructions were issued by the HQ to the Arab Legion to reinforce the small unit it had already sent to guard the Allenby Bridge and to send one infantry regiment to Nablus and one armoured regiment to Ramallah. The Legion did nothing on either count. This provided the opportunity for the Israelis to move against the Iraqi forces in this area and to send reinforcements to Gesher, along the Jordan, to help the local settlers repel the Iraqi offensive.

In view of the situation of the Iraqi and Syrian armies, on May 16 HQ asked the Legion to send a force to Jenin and from there proceed to attack Afuleh. The reply was that they would study the situation but no action was taken. So two days later General Mahmud went to Ramallah to see Glubb in a vain attempt to discover the reasons for the Arab Legion's inaction.

Juburi, Glubb, and senior Egyptian, Syrian, and Lebanese officers went to the palace in Amman on May 20 for a meeting with King Abdullah, Abd al-Illah, and Azzam Pasha. The king opened the meeting with a general survey and made some favourable remarks on Glubb's energetic contribution to their common objectives. Azzam added that everybody was grateful to Glubb for his loyal and distinguished service to the Arab cause over a long period of time. Behind this flattery, Juburi detected a desire to elicit a more co-operative attitude but he himself was convinced that Glubb was not the kind of man who would allow Arab flattery to deflect him from carrying out the orders of the British government. At the time Juburi had no knowledge of the secret meeting between Bevin, Glubb, and Abul Huda, but when he learnt about it after the war it confirmed his suspicions that Glubb's direction of the operations of the Arab Legion in 1948 conformed to a plan that had previously been settled in London.

At the meeting in the palace there was some discussion of the reasons that had compelled the Arab armies to depart from the invasion plan that had been agreed in the joint HQ. Glubb suggested that some units of the Iraqi army remain at the Majami Bridge to guard the frontier while other units be moved to occupy Nablus. Juburi resisted this suggestion on the grounds that it would split the Iraqi army into two parts operating in two widely separated areas. He wanted the Iraqi army to stay as one unit so that it could operate more effectively in an offensive capacity. The Egyptian representative, General Sabour, agreed with Juburi. To forestall an open rift between the military and to deprive Glubb of the excuse for acting independently, some of the politicians suggested that it be left to Glubb and Mahmud to work out jointly a new operational plan.

Just as the Iraqi army was preparing to launch another offensive in Gesher, it received the instruction from the joint HQ to move to Nablus. Consequently, it had to abandon Gesher and proceed to Nablus where it confronted the enemy single-handed in the battle for the Triangle. As we have seen, the Iraqi army fought tenaciously in the Triangle, held the line against Israeli advances, and succeeded in forcing the Israelis to retreat from

Jenin under heavy fire. Nevertheless, there is some strength in Juburi's argument that had the Arab Legion followed the instructions of the joint HQ and had it not exposed the southern flank of the Iraqi force to encirclement by the enemy, better results overall could have been secured for the Arab side. Juburi's analysis is particularly noteworthy for highlighting the discord and mistrust between the Iraqi and the Transjordanian commanders who, of all the Arab commanders, were supposed to be collaborating in the service of the Hashemite dynasty.

Whether the result of the lack of Transjordanian co-operation or the objective balance of forces, by the end of the first week in June a clear stalemate had developed on the central front and a similarly inconclusive situation prevailed on all the other fronts. Recognition by the opposing parties that from the military point of view they had reached a stalemate, at least temporarily, facilitated Count Bernadotte's task in arranging a truce. On June 7 he notified the parties that the truce would begin on June 11 and gave them two days to communicate their unconditional acceptance.

The Israelis were first to announce their acceptance, and this time the Arab League followed suit. To the Israelis the truce came, in Moshe Carmel's words, like dew from heaven. Though they had succeeded in halting the Arab invasion, their fighting forces were stretched to the limit and badly needed a respite to rest, to reorganize, to bring in arms from abroad, and to train new recruits. Despite all their efforts, the main road to Jerusalem remained blocked. At Ben-Gurion's insistence, a further attempt was made to take Latrun on June 9 but the Israeli attack broke up in disarray just before the truce came into effect.

Ben-Gurion himself had no faith in the United Nations' ability either to arrange or to enforce a truce and on June 11, as the soldiers were laying down their arms, he formulated his own strategy for continuing the fight. As he saw it there were three fronts:

> The Jerusalem and central front (including the Triangle) where our task is to destroy the Legion and capture the Triangle; the southern front, including the Negev; and the Galilee front, including Haifa. In the

Galilee, the principal enemy is Lebanon and Syria, and our target is to hit Beirut (Tyre and Sidon) and bring about a Christian uprising, and, on the other hand, Kuneitra and Damascus. In the south we would have to stand mainly against Egypt and her turn will come after we break the power of the Legion and take Lebanon out of the game.

Clearly, Ben-Gurion expected only a temporary lull in the fighting and he continued to view the Arab Legion as the prime enemy.

In contrast to Ben-Gurion, Abdullah was immensely satisfied with the achievements of his army in the first round and determined to do what he could to prevent the outbreak of a second round. His own star was in the ascendant as a result of the Legion's intervention in Jerusalem and staunch resistance in Latrun. But his army needed a respite to replenish its dangerously depleted stocks of ammunition and to recruit and train new fighters to replace those who had died in battle. It also needed time in order to consolidate its position for an eventual takeover of the West Bank. International pressure provided Abdullah with an honourable way of bringing the fighting to an end. The continuation of hostilities could only wear out the small army which was also his principal defence against his Arab antagonists.

9

The Counter-Offensive

Count Bernadotte's proposals for a settlement

Amman became increasingly a centre for Arab political and military decisions as a result of its successes in the first round of fighting. From the military point of view, however, the four weeks' truce was largely wasted by the Arab side. No serious preparations were made by any of the Arab countries to reorganize and re-equip their armies so that they would be better placed in the event of the war being resumed. When Glubb explained the precarious position to Abul Huda and asked him to sanction further enlistments into the Arab Legion, he was firmly told that there will be 'no more fighting and no more money for soldiers'.

King Abdullah went on a tour of Arab capitals to consolidate his leadership and to achieve greater unity on the fundamental questions of war and peace in Palestine. He made no secret of his view that the resumption of the war would be disastrous to the Arabs and the real purpose of his visit was to generate what goodwill he could for his plan to incorporate parts of Palestine in his kingdom. Knowing that Count Bernadotte was about to propose a territorial settlement that would be favourable to Transjordan, Abdullah visited King Farouk of Egypt and King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia in an effort to allay their anxieties. The visit was successful in creating the outward impression that the Arabs were united, particularly on the Palestine issue, but politically it achieved very little.

Abdullah fared rather better in his search for international support for the enlargement of his kingdom. The Americans began to appreciate his pragmatism and to favour a settlement based on a *rapprochement* between Transjordan and Israel. In discussions between American and British officials, Abdullah

was even described as the 'trump card' for persuading the Arab states to accept a Jewish state as a permanent feature of the Middle Eastern landscape.

Count Bernadotte was strongly influenced by Anglo-American thinking on how to bring about a peaceful adjustment of the Palestine conflict. He also realized that the fate of any proposals he might make would depend to a large extent on the attitude of the Great Powers. The Palestine problem was complicated by the fact that there were so many countries and groups with different interests involved. The position of the Arabs was particularly confused and confusing. It was axiomatic that no solution of the Palestine problem could satisfy both Jews and Arabs, but no solution could satisfy all the Arabs either. So in formulating his suggestions for a settlement, Bernadotte tried to bear in mind the aspirations of the Jews, the political difficulties and differences of opinion of the Arab leaders, and the strategic interests of the Great Powers. The deeper he delved, the more convinced he became that the United Nations resolution of 29 November 1947 did not constitute a sound basis for a settlement.

Bernadotte's suggestions for a settlement, issued on 27 June 1948, omitted all reference to the UN plan for an independent Arab state in part of Palestine. Instead, he proposed that the whole of Palestine as defined in the original mandate—that is, including Transjordan—might form a union comprising two members, one Arab and one Jewish. The functions of the union would be to promote the common economic interests, operate the common services, and co-ordinate foreign policy and measures for common defence. Attached to the proposals there was an annexe dealing with territorial matters in which Bernadotte suggested the inclusion of the whole or part of the Negev in the Arab territory and the inclusion of the whole or part of western Galilee in the Jewish territory. He further proposed that Jerusalem should be Arab, that Haifa be a free seaport, and Lydda a free airport.

One of the surprising features of Bernadotte's plan was that he looked at Transjordan and Palestine as a single unit and proposed that this entire area be repartitioned on the principle that the

Arab part of Palestine should be annexed to Transjordan. This proposal was reminiscent of what the Peel Commission had recommended in 1937, namely, that a Jewish state be established in the western part of Palestine and the rest attached to Transjordan. The difference between the Peel plan and the Bernadotte plan was that the former envisaged two sovereign states, while the latter included both states in a union with economic and political powers.

Bernadotte's suggestions were angrily rejected by both sides. In Israel he was generally regarded as a British stooge. On reading his suggestions Ben-Gurion remarked that the suspicion that the count was Bevin's agent was not entirely unjustified. In Israeli eyes the suggestions represented complete capitulation to Anglo-Arab pressure, a disastrous blunder. One of the Hebrew papers called it an attempt 'to harness our defence and foreign policy to the chariot of Abdullah's master, Britain'. Bevin was said to be trying to squeeze Israel into boundaries 'the size of a coffin'. In its official reply the Israeli government excoriated Bernadotte for ignoring the resolution of the General Assembly of 29 November 1947; it rejected any infringement of Israel's sovereignty; it stated that it would never acquiesce in the imposition of Arab domination over Jerusalem; and it advised him to reconsider his whole approach to the problem.

The Arabs rejected the suggestions out of hand and condemned Bernadotte for denying them everything they sought while giving the Jews everything they were seeking. The Arab reply was accompanied by a counter-proposal which amounted to a repetition of the old Arab demand that Palestine should be constituted as a unitary state with protection for the Jewish minority. The Arabs objected to Bernadotte's suggestions not only because they ratified the existence of an independent Jewish state but also because they would have increased the threat posed by King Abdullah. Jamil Mardam, the Syrian prime minister, declared that the proposed union was worse than partition since, if accepted, it would make Transjordan a Jewish colony and constitute an even greater menace to the Arab world.

Great disappointment was felt in Amman that the other Arab

capitals refused to accept Bernadotte's proposals even as a basis for negotiations. King Abdullah must have been surprised by the mediator's extraordinary partiality towards him. Not only was he to receive the areas of Palestine previously earmarked for the Arab state but the Negev and the whole of Jerusalem as well. Had Britain herself drafted the proposals they could have scarcely been more favourable. Britain, after all, accepted the internationalization of Jerusalem, whereas Bernadotte proposed to give it to Abdullah as his capital. Yet, since both Israel and the Arab League rejected the proposals, it would have been pointless for Abdullah to accept them. To avoid being denounced as a traitor to the Arab cause, he reluctantly toed the official Arab League line.

Bernadotte's first attempt at a political settlement of the Palestine problem was thus an unmitigated failure. It damaged his own prestige and left behind a legacy of suspicion and mistrust of the United Nations. There was a belief among the Arab states that Britain was manipulating international diplomacy for the benefit of Abdullah and a consequent fear that even if they were to step up their military involvement, they would be robbed of the fruits of their victory. Rather than try to preserve a united Arab front, each country therefore increasingly looked after its own interests.

In Israel, too, Bernadotte's failure undermined the authority of the United Nations and encouraged the tendency to act unilaterally. It was with great reluctance that Israel had accepted the 1947 provision for the internationalization of Jerusalem as part of the UN package that offered independent statehood. Now that the UN's own representative himself had violated that provision by offering to place Jerusalem, with its 100,000 Jewish inhabitants, under Arab rule, Israel no longer felt herself bound by it. Ben-Gurion had already concluded that the 1947 partition resolution was a dead letter since the UN had failed to enforce it. On June 24 he told the other twelve members of the State Council that the problem of Jerusalem was no longer a political question but essentially one of military capability and that, like any area that was under the control of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF), it

formed part of the state of Israel. Bernadotte's proposal only reinforced Ben-Gurion in his view that Israel must capture the Old City, remove the danger of encirclement by the Arab Legion, and establish a wide and safe corridor to link Jerusalem to the rest of the state.

Having failed to promote a settlement of the Palestine problem, Bernadotte proposed an extension of the truce which was due to expire on July 9. Abdullah came under strong pressure from Britain to agree to the proposal. Glubb impressed upon the government that the Arab armies had lost the momentum and were running short of ammunition and equipment. Tawfiq Abul Huda was sent to the Arab League meeting in Cairo with clear instructions to work for the prolongation of the truce, but in Cairo he found himself in a minority of one. Nuqrashi Pasha, on whom Abul Huda had counted for support, made a speech in favour of renewing the fighting—a gesture designed to appease the belligerent Egyptian public. All the Arab military leaders pointed to the gravity of their supply position but the politicians voted unanimously not to renew the truce. To deal with the difficulty of resuming hostilities when their arsenals were depleted, the Arab politicians settled on a defensive strategy of holding on to existing positions.

Abdullah suspected that the Cairo decision was taken with the sinister intention of undermining his diplomatic strategy and embroiling his army in a potentially disastrous war with the Israelis. He therefore summoned Count Bernadotte to Amman to express his extreme uneasiness at the prospect of war breaking out afresh and to urge him to use the full power of the United Nations to bring about a reversal of the Arab League's warlike decision. But the Egyptians pre-empted by attacking on July 8, thereby ending the truce and committing the Arab side irreversibly to a second round of fighting.

The ten days' fighting, 8–18 July 1948

The Arab leaders' decision to renew the war for political reasons but remain on the defensive for military reasons left the initiative

in the hands of the enemy. Whereas the Arab leaders had frittered away the first truce in sterile political wrangles, the Israelis had used it to retrain and reorganize their forces and to bring in volunteers and large quantities of modern weapons, including tanks and aircraft, mostly from the Soviet bloc, thus tipping the military balance decisively in their favour. They also had very detailed operational plans for the deployment of their newly acquired military capability. In contrast to the divisions that existed between the political and the military echelons at the outbreak of the war, there was now a general consensus that Israel must open the second round with an offensive on the central front against the Arab Legion.

When hostilities were resumed, the IDF quickly seized the initiative on the central front with Operation Danny. In the first phase the objective was to eliminate the Lydda–Ramle wedge which threatened Tel Aviv as well as the road to Jerusalem; the second phase called for opening a wide corridor to Jerusalem by capturing Latrun, and Ramallah. All these places—Lydda, Ramle, Latrun, and Ramallah—had been assigned to the Arabs and fell within the perimeter held by the Arab Legion.

Glubb was faced with a difficult choice. If he spread his forces thinly across the entire front, Latrun, the real objective of the Israeli attack, might be overrun; if he concentrated his forces at Latrun, Lydda and Ramle would have to be sacrificed. Glubb had two battalions at Latrun and he came under pressure to send one of them to reinforce the garrisons in Lydda and Ramle, but he feared that it would be cut off and surrounded by the Israelis who would then move against the remaining battalion at Latrun. Latrun commanded not only the main road to Jerusalem but also the road leading to Ramallah. Consequently, if Latrun fell, the Israelis would march on Ramallah and from there overrun the Transjordanian forces north of Jerusalem and attack the Iraqi forces in the Triangle from the rear. Latrun was thus the key to the whole front and Glubb decided, with the agreement of the king and the prime minister, to sacrifice Lydda and Ramle in order to defend it.

While Glubb prepared to meet the Israeli offensive, Abdullah

made a last bid to restore the truce. He sent a telegram to the other Arab states saying that the Arab Legion was short of ammunition and that unless they undertook an immediate and victorious offensive, they would be defeated in a long defensive war. He went on to say that unless his government could be assured of such an offensive, they would with regret have to withdraw their troops from the fight. The Arab League was thrown into utter confusion and indignation. It was not understood how Abdullah could say this a few hours after the declaration that 'the cannon must now speak'. The lack of ammunition was therefore simply not believed, and Abdullah's intention to stop fighting was put down to treachery.

When the Israeli forces, meeting with little resistance, captured Lydda and Ramle on July 12 and forced their inhabitants to flee across the Jordan, it was Glubb's turn to be accused of treachery by the Arabs. The fact that he had repeatedly warned both the king and the government that these towns could not possibly be held in the event of fighting being resumed, was considered in some quarters as evidence that the British commander had deliberately lost them on orders from London designed to ensure that Transjordan accepted a truce at all costs. Demonstrations against the Arab Legion took place in Nablus and Salt, and Glubb was summoned to attend an unpleasant interview with the king and Council of Ministers during which it was made clear to him that his stories of ammunition shortages were not believed. The king took the opportunity to tell him that if he did not want to serve the country loyally, there was no need for him to stay. To deflect public criticisms from themselves, some of the ministers put it about that Glubb and the British officers were purposely leading the Arab Legion to destruction to further Bevin's wicked intrigues.

Following the fall of Lydda and Ramle, Glubb visited the Arab Legion positions in Palestine and reported to the government that if Israeli pressure were to continue, the position would become critical in a few days owing to exhaustion of supplies of artillery and mortar shells. He expressed the opinion that the Arab Legion should begin to fall back while it still had ammunition to extricate

its units intact. The government, however, rejected this advice and ordered him to hold on at all costs. The prime minister and the foreign minister went to Kirkbride to plead for supplies. They pointed out that the Arab Legion had nowhere departed from the policy which the prime minister had described to Bevin and that its activities had been limited to the Arab areas of Palestine. They had no desire to continue the fight but could not act independently of the rest of the Arab League except to the extent of ordering the Arab Legion to stay on the defensive if more ammunition was forthcoming. They felt it inconceivable that Bevin should allow the Arab Legion to be destroyed and so endanger the existence of the Arab state most closely bound to Britain.

Glubb approached the Iraqi chief of staff, Salih Saib al-Juburi, with a request for shells but was told that the Iraqi army, with its supplies cut off by Britain, had none to spare. Pointing out that to carry on fighting in these conditions was bound to end in disaster for their side, Glubb suggested that both of them should resign. Juburi, suspecting Glubb of playing a double game and of trying to involve him in it, replied that Glubb was free to resign as he was a foreigner but he himself had his national duty to perform. Military defeat, added Juburi, was likely to provoke political unrest and revolutions throughout the Arab world.

From the Iraqi regent, Juburi heard that Glubb had sent a report to Abdullah suggesting the withdrawal of the Arab Legion from Palestine and that the king's answer, written on the report, said: 'If you want to withdraw, I will go to lead the army. Thank you for your service until now.' Abd al-Illah also informed Juburi that there was a suggestion that Iraqi officers might be appointed to lead the Arab Legion instead of the British officers.

King Abdullah took the initiative in arranging a further session of the Political Committee to reconsider the situation in Palestine and to discuss ways and means of making good the Legion's deficit. Azzam arrived in Amman on July 12, full of suspicions as to what plots Abdullah might have been making with Bernadotte and determined to ensure that the good work done in Cairo was not reversed in a moment of panic. Jamil Mardam, the Syrian

prime minister, and Riad al-Sulh, the Lebanese prime minister, duly joined the party the next day. Among the questions discussed at the meeting were Glubb's position and his suggestion for the withdrawal of the Arab Legion from Palestine. The possibility that Transjordan would back out of the war evoked anxiety on the part of all the other participants. General Juburi, who accompanied Abd al-Illah to the meeting, bitterly criticized Transjordan for abandoning Lydda and Ramle without considering the effect of this action on the other Arab armies. The meeting ended somewhat inconclusively. Syria and Egypt having made vague promises to provide the ammunition required by the Arab Legion, it was resolved to continue with the fighting, and the Committee dispersed pending receipt of some communication from the Security Council.

The Israeli army, having successfully carried out the first phase of Operation Danny, made a determined effort to outflank Latrun from the north and cut if off from Ramallah. To forestall the danger of encirclement, the Legion committed its only reserve regiment to Latrun and mounted there some of its fiercest counter-attacks of the entire war. Both sides fought bravely and tenaciously but in the end the Israeli offensive was repulsed.

The fighting in Latrun used up the dwindling supplies of ammunition at the Legion's disposal at an alarming rate and the Syrians and Egyptians failed to deliver the supplies they had promised. On July 17 Glubb estimated that he had sufficient artillery ammunition to hold the front until the evening of the following day. As he had written orders from the king in no circumstances to retreat, only a truce could save his forces from total isolation in the area of Bab el Wad.

While maintaining the pressure in this area, the Israelis also made a last minute attempt to capture the Old City of Jerusalem. With the renewal of the fighting they took the Malha and Ein Kerem quarters and thus succeeded in widening the southern part of the corridor. On the eve of the second truce, they mounted a further attack with a view to capturing the Old City. The order of the GHQ of July 16 called for two simultaneous attacks, one on Shaikh Jarrah and the other to establish a bridgehead inside the

Old City. Although the order stated that if only one operation was possible that evening, priority should be given to Shaikh Jarrah, the local commander, David Shaltiel, chose to mount the other attack, code-named Operation Kedem. It ended in total failure and the Old City remained in the hands of the Arab Legion during the second truce. Shaltiel was replaced by a much more aggressive commander with combat experience: a young major named Moshe Dayan who had won his spurs by leading the daring commando raid into Lydda and Ramle.

On July 15 the Security Council passed a resolution calling for a cease-fire. In contrast to the first truce, this time the Security Council did not wait for the combatants' reply but took a strong line, threatening to resort to sanctions against any party that failed to issue a cease-fire order within three days. Moreover, no time limit was fixed for the duration of the truce: it was to continue until the mediator came up with proposals for a permanent settlement. The Arab League's Political Committee assembled in Aley, Lebanon, to consider the order. All the Arab armies had lost ground during the previous ten days, and continuation of the fighting carried the risk of even greater disasters. Arab politicians were anxious to find an excuse to stop but needed some scapegoat on whom to lay the blame. By supporting the American call for sanctions and threatening the Arabs with serious political and military consequences if they defied the Security Council, Britain presented herself as a convenient scapegoat. Britain had reversed her policy, it was claimed, and joined the United States and the Jews in opposing the Arabs. The fact that the Syrians, Iraqis, and Egyptians had all suffered reverses was brushed aside. The extremists could not eradicate the impression that the Arab Legion was the most efficient army but they hastened to point out that such an army was of no value to an Arab state because its operations would be controlled from London and not by its Arab chiefs.

The British not only pressed the Arabs to accept the truce but also advised the Israelis to re-establish contact with Abdullah. Hector McNeil, the minister of state at the Foreign Office, told Dr Nahum Goldmann, the moderate American Zionist leader, that

they were encouraging Abdullah to get ready for a settlement with Israel. The more urgent task was to bring the fighting to an end. Abdullah needed no convincing of the gravity of the military situation. He assured Christopher Pirie-Gordon, first secretary in the British Legation in Amman, that he was doing all he could. This consisted of sending a telegram to his prime minister in Aley regularly every hour urging him to insist on the acceptance of the truce. He sent an extra one in Pirie-Gordon's presence as a makeweight and sign of good faith.

Despite Iraqi and Syrian opposition, on July 18 the Political Committee decided to accept the truce. Since the military reports did not encourage the continuation of fighting, the motives for this opposition must have been largely political. In any case, it had no practical effects because the following day the fighting ceased on all fronts. To the embattled Transjordanian forces the truce arrived just in time. They had maintained their positions in the Old City, Latrun, and Ramallah but they could not have continued to do so as their ammunition was almost exhausted. Besides, the troops were needed at home to deal with the influx of refugees, anti-British protests, and the indignation of thwarted patriotism sparked off by the fall of Lydda and Ramle.

Israel's strategic position improved immeasurably as a result of the ten days' fighting. She seized the initiative on all three fronts and was to retain it until the end of the war. In the north the IDF captured parts of Western Galilee and Lower Galilee. In the south they captured a number of villages and widened their hold on the northern Negev approaches. A major new wave of refugees was created by these operations. The bulk of the Palestinian refugees, some 250,000 to 300,000, went into exile between April and mid-June, the principal cause being Jewish military attack or the fear of such attack. The Israeli operations of July 9–18 drove roughly 100,000 more Arabs into exile in Transjordanian-held eastern Palestine, Lebanon, Upper Galilee, and the Gaza Strip. By forcibly expelling the inhabitants of Lydda and Ramle, the IDF created long refugee columns which cluttered the roads eastwards and would have severely hampered a counter-attack by the Arab Legion had such a counter-attack been launched. The desire to

clog the routes of advance of the Legion could have played only a minor part, if any part at all, in the high-level decision to expel the civilian population of these two towns. But the problems that this new wave of refugees entailed for the authorities in Amman did not go unnoticed. On July 15 Ben-Gurion recorded in his diary: 'The Arab Legion cables that on the road from Lydda and Ramle some 30,000 refugees are on the move, who are very angry with the Legion. They demand bread. They must be transferred to Transjordan. In Transjordan there are anti-government demonstrations.'

10

Lull in the Storm

The renewal of Israeli contact with Abdullah

During the lull in the storm that followed the ten days' whirlwind, King Abdullah kept flirting with the idea of bilateral negotiations with Israel even though he got no encouragement from either his ministers or his British friends. He was reported to be in good spirits following the cessation of hostilities, and the prospect of a large kingdom seemed to agree with him. Though it did not go as planned, the war had served its basic purpose in enabling him to occupy the central areas of Arab Palestine. Not only was there nothing further to be gained from an appeal to arms, but such an appeal could jeopardize both his territorial gains and his army, the mainstay of his regime and his only defence against his Arab opponents. Accordingly, the king shifted his attention from the military to the political arena. He now desired a restoration of peace and understanding with the Israelis and he was ready for the resumption of direct contact with them.

For the Israeli leaders, too, the centre of gravity began to shift from war to politics as they picked their way through the maze of negotiations, trying to keep clear of all the pitfalls. They regarded the truce as a thinly disguised continuation of the war since it did not permit them to demobilize the population under arms, thus imposing an unbearable economic burden. To them an indefinite truce was equivalent to a death sentence to be executed at the convenience of the Arabs. Prompt and direct negotiations with the Arab states were, from their point of view, the only practicable way out of the impasse. The Israeli leaders remained deeply suspicious of the British and therefore anxious to exclude them as far as possible from any peace negotiations. Count Bernadotte was viewed as Britain's poodle, hence the attempts to undermine his credibility, isolate him, and bypass him. In a major

speech before the Provisional State Council on July 22, Prime Minister Ben-Gurion declared that the time had come for a solution of the Palestinian problem by direct negotiations and not through the good offices of the mediator. Foreign Minister Shertok, who had marked the establishment of the State of Israel by adopting the Hebrew name Sharett, cunningly used the mediator's good offices to convey to the Arab governments an invitation to hold direct talks.

Apart from limiting British influence there were two other advantages that the Israelis expected to realize through direct talks. First, the obvious disunity in the Arab camp gave Israel considerable room for manœuvre. The Arabs had marched into Palestine together but as they sustained blows and military reverses, each country looked increasingly to her own needs. Within ten days the position of the Arab states changed fundamentally, from being the attacker to being attacked. Each country was licking its wounds and was in no position and in no mood to help the others or subordinate her interests to the common cause. Under these circumstances anyone looking for cracks in the wall of Arab unity could easily find them. Israel, with the memory of her military victories still fresh in everybody's mind, was well placed to play off the Arab states against one another. Secondly, it was a propitious time to engage in exploratory talks because the positions of both sides were still rather fluid. The Arab demands on borders and refugees had not crystallized yet, nor had Israel's response to these demands. The Israeli aim was therefore to seize the diplomatic initiative, to establish direct contact with Arab leaders, to sound out opinion, and to exploit opportunities.

Elias Sasson, Israel's greatest-ever practitioner of the art of Oriental diplomacy and now head of the Middle East Department in the Israeli Foreign Ministry, was sent to Paris in early July in order to set the process in motion. Two Arabic-speaking assistants, Shmuel Divon and Tuvia Arazi, accompanied him to Paris to set up a base for their diplomatic and intelligence operations. His deputy, Yaacov Shimoni, stayed at home to run the department and help co-ordinate the activities of the Paris-based unit with local efforts to initiate talks with local Arab figures.

Sasson set himself the task of contacting as many Arab representatives as possible in Paris, both official and unofficial, in order to exchange views about ways and means of settling the Arab-Israeli conflict. He was not constrained to pursue any particular political orientation; either Egyptian, or Syrian or Hashemite or specifically Transjordanian. He was left a free hand to follow his hunches and contact anyone he chose to. 'There was no agenda for negotiations', remarked Shimoni. 'Sasson's role, and Sasson's forte, lay in maintaining contact, in serving as a sounding board and communicating ideas. He was like an octopus with a thousand tentacles looking for catch.'

Yet it was not entirely fortuitous that Sasson reserved much of his skill and energy for the task of restoring the severed link with King Abdullah. Nor is it accidental that of all Sasson's efforts this was the one that was most quickly crowned with success. Sasson wrote to Dr Shawkat as-Sati, the king's personal physician and confidant, and invited him to talks in Paris. Instead of Dr Sati, the Transjordanian minister in London, Amir Abdul Majid Haidar, arrived in Paris, saying he had been sent by the king 'to exchange views and examine the possibilities for an understanding'. The first meeting, on August 3, was friendly and lasted four hours. Haidar wanted to know Israel's final aim and her attitude to Bernadotte, to the refugee problem, and to the annexation of Arab Palestine to Transjordan.

Since Haidar promised to send a copy of Israel's reply to the king, Sharett cabled Sasson detailed guidelines and answers. Sasson was to preface his answer by saying that Transjordan's aggression caused them to revise their whole attitude to the king, leading to serious doubts as to whether it would not be preferable for Arab Palestine to stand alone. Nevertheless, in view of their past friendship, they were prepared to make a renewed attempt to reach an understanding, but the fact that aggression had been committed would naturally influence their attitude. They had no confidence in Bernadotte and preferred direct dealings to his mediation. More specifically, Sasson was to propose a solution based on the UN partition plan with substantial changes in Israel's favour, the balance to be joined to Transjordan; the

resettlement of the refugees in the enlarged kingdom with the king's political assistance and Israeli financial support; an economic alliance that would benefit Transjordan; Israeli assistance in getting an American development loan for the king and in securing Transjordan's recognition by the United States and admission to the United Nations. The king could have an unspecified part of Jerusalem, with the Israelis keeping new Jerusalem and the corridor to Tel Aviv, while the Old City would be administered jointly with an international umpire.

Abdullah did not wait to hear the outcome of the Paris talks before embarking on an initiative of his own. The Belgian consul-general in Jerusalem, Jean Nieuwenhuys, had sent the king his greetings for the fast of Ramadan and concluded with a hope for peace. Abdullah seized on this last sentence of the letter to ask Nieuwenhuys to visit him urgently. During the visit, on August 8, the king referred several times to 'my friend Shertok' and asked the consul to propose to him that their representatives should meet informally in Cyprus. Regarding the refugees, the king said he would keep all the mufti's supporters in Transjordan and asked that Israel should readmit the others. Sharett asked the consul to tell Abdullah that they agreed to meet but preferred Paris to Cyprus. When no word came back from Amman, Sharett suspected that the British had got wind of the king's move and advised him not to carry it through.

In fact the Belgian consul did not convey Sharett's reply until August 27 when he saw the king in Amman. Also present on this occasion was Abdel Ghani al-Karmi, who had frequently served as a secret emissary between the court and the Jewish Agency. The king said he had stopped the London–Paris talks because of press leaks but that he would send another representative to meet Sasson in the near future. He was hopeful of positive results despite the fact that Sharett had to contend with the right-wing extremists while he himself had to contend with the Arab League. If agreement was reached, said Abdullah, he would be prepared to go ahead without the League.

At his next visit to the palace, on September 9, the Belgian consul, at Sharett's behest, assured the king that the leak to the

press had occurred in Tel Aviv and that Sasson was completely innocent. The king stated that Fawzi el-Mulki, the minister of defence, and Said al-Mufti, the minister of trade, would proceed to Paris as observers to the General Assembly and would be available for working out a peace settlement with Sasson. To enhance his prestige in the Arab League, the king requested that Israel readmit the refugees from Lydda and Ramle, whose distress was particularly acute, but if a peace programme including this measure of repatriation was to be rejected by the League, he would go ahead regardless. He reported that he was taking steps to check the increase in Husayni activity in Palestine by sending contingents to the affected areas. He pressed the consul to revisit him in Irbid after seeing Sharett.

Sensing Abdullah's impatience, Sharett resorted to the usual diplomatic ploy of feigning indifference. He told the consul to say that he was in a very cautious mood and that with reports that the Arab armies in Palestine had doubled their strength during the truce, Israel would have to strengthen her positions along the entire front and could not possibly spare the troops to deal with the massive repatriation of the people of the two towns. Sharett said they would treat any Transjordanian proposals on their merits but urged Abdullah to start thinking seriously about the resettlement of the bulk of the refugees in his zone, and hoped that Israel might prevail on the United States to give him a loan for this purpose.

Nieuwenhuys visited Abdullah in Irbid on September 14 to convey Sharett's comments. The king said that the Egyptian and Iraqi armies had received scant reinforcement. The Legion had received more substantial reinforcements but the Israelis had no need to worry as it was firmly in hand. He again insisted on the readmission of the non-Husaynis to Lydda and Ramle as a gesture that would enhance his prestige, defeat the intrigues of Nuqrashi and the mufti, deal a blow to the League as a whole, and serve as a basis for a population exchange between Palestine and Transjordan. Sharett told the consul that repatriation of refugees, even partial, was out of the question for the present but he would formulate his reply within a couple of days so that the

thread would not snap. In short, Sharett had correctly identified the refugee problem as the most critical and burning issue in Israeli–Transjordanian relations, but he was stalling in the hope that a solution would emerge without any substantial Israeli concessions.

Sharett's stand reflected a rapidly evolving Israeli consensus against permitting any Arab refugees to return to their homes. The new official line was that as long as the war continued no refugees would be allowed to return, and that after the war Israel would consider schemes for a solution but only within the framework of a comprehensive peace settlement. Sasson was one of the very few officials who dared challenge the official line against repatriation. He was moved not so much by humanitarian concern for the plight of the refugees but by an enlightened conception of Israel's self-interest, and above all her interest in peaceful coexistence with her neighbours. He pointed out that Israeli propaganda on the refugee question was counter-productive. The intention behind it was to turn the refugees and their anger against the Arab leaders whereas Israel's true interest lay in promoting the absorption of these refugees in the Arab countries. The only Arab leader who could be counted on to adopt a reasonable and co-operative attitude was Abdullah. Logic suggested, therefore, that Israel's effort should be directed not at undermining him but at making him popular with the refugees so that he in turn would be able to negotiate the fate of the refugees without fear from his rivals and appear as the saviour of the Palestine Arabs, not as a traitor to the Palestine cause.

From his isolated outpost in the French capital, Sasson fired off a barrage of angry letters at his colleagues. The indiscretion of the officials in Tel Aviv in revealing to the press that secret peace talks were under way, he charged, had aborted his contact with Amir Abdul Majid Haidar. In vain Sasson waited for the two Transjordanian ministers to contact him and, for a while, it looked as if he had lost the thread to Amman altogether. But it was on the broad questions of policy towards the Arab world that Sasson found himself most out of accord with the official line. He urged his colleagues at home not to remain within the confines of

a parochial and blinkered view on such questions as the future of the refugees and the renewal of the war but to widen their horizons and impress on the policymakers the need for a broader international perspective.

Shimoni denied that there was any substantive difference between Sasson and the other officials in the Middle East Department except on the refugee question. He also informed his boss that there was a chance to renew the contact with Transjordan through emissaries who were leaving from the Beisan area. At first Shimoni was doubtful about this prospect because he did not want to get in the way of Sasson's operations. But Sharett ruled that it was important to try and win over Muhammad Zubati not for the purpose of conducting parallel negotiations or shifting the centre of gravity from Paris to Tel Aviv but solely in order to be able to steer the king in the right direction and monitor his actions and his thoughts.

Count Bernadotte's last will and testament

Count Bernadotte was aware of the efforts being made by the Israelis to dispense with his mediation and establish direct contact with the Arabs. But he also had Azzam Pasha's assurance that all the members of the Arab League took the view that it would be a mistake to open direct negotiations with the Jews and that any discussions on a proposal for a final settlement should be conducted through the offices of the United Nations mediator. Having had his first set of suggestions rejected by all local parties to the Palestine dispute, Bernadotte increasingly looked to the Great Powers for guidance and support. He was not eager to offer suggestions until he was assured that the British and American governments were in agreement with him. He realized that the Israelis would make exorbitant demands and that the Arabs would refuse to countenance officially the existence of a Jewish state. Nevertheless, he felt that if the two governments lined up behind him, both Israelis and Arabs would move protestingly towards an eventual settlement.

Discussions between the Foreign Office and the State

Department in the course of August and early September revealed a remarkable measure of agreement on the outlines of a settlement. The main feature of this consensus, as of Bernadotte's tentative ideas, was the partition of Palestine into two geographically compact territories instead of the enclaves, corridors, and complicated lines recommended by the General Assembly in November 1947. This involved the inclusion of the whole of the Galilee in the Jewish state in exchange for the allocation of the Negev to the Arabs.

The gap between what the British, the Americans, and the Swedish mediator considered an equitable settlement and what the Arabs and Israelis were prepared to agree to remained unbridgeable. Nearly all the Arab politicians consulted by the mediator said they would not be coerced by the United Nations into recognizing Israel or making peace with her. Nuqrashi Pasha said that he realized that the hope of preventing the emergence of an independent Jewish state had been crushed but the Arabs would nevertheless continue to regard Palestine as Arab territory and the Jews as rebels, and in his view the wisest course would be to constitute the Arab part of Palestine as a separate and independent state supported by the Arab League. Nuqrashi did not wish to see Palestine united with Transjordan because that would upset the balance of power in the Arab world. Nor could he agree to the partition of Arab Palestine among a number of Arab countries because that would only be grist to the mill of those who claimed that Egypt had entered the war in order to make territorial conquests. Only the Transjordanian prime minister shared the mediator's view that there was no getting away from the fact that the Jewish state existed and would continue to exist, and that the best solution would be the partition of Palestine.

No amount of political manœuvring could secure Arab approval for the incorporation in Transjordan of the Arab part of Palestine. The Transjordanian authorities were under no illusion on this subject but given international approval, they were prepared to disregard any reactions which their expansion was liable to cause in the rest of the Arab world. The prime minister

and the king were determined to avoid for as long as they could any commitment on the subject of Bernadotte's emergent proposals because anything they said was immediately misrepresented and used against them. It was best for them to say nothing and be able later to acquiesce in a United Nations' solution which they were in no position to oppose.

The officials in London feared that US recognition of Transjordan before the Arabs had acquiesced to Bernadotte's proposals would greatly weaken Transjordan's already shaky position in the eyes of its Arab neighbours who would be quick to allege that it was evidence of a deal by which the United States paid Transjordan with recognition for selling out the Arab cause in Palestine. The Foreign Office officials had no doubt that the Arab press and public would roundly denounce any proposals put forward by Bernadotte but they believed that the 'acquiescence' of the Arab states could be secured eventually. However, the vigour of these denunciations, they warned the Americans, would be greatly increased if a local scapegoat wearing the horns of perfidy were available. The United Nations had the advantage of being 'an intangible villain, but "Rabbi" Abdullah, upon whom we will have to rely so heavily at a later stage, is already on the spot and would be in an even worse one if he were to appear prior to UN action as party to [a] "deal"'. If Transjordan was to be useful in achieving a lasting settlement, it was essential in the Foreign Office view that Abdullah should seem just as outraged as the other Arab leaders with whom it was expedient that he should display every sign of solidarity. In essence, the Foreign Office view was that the timing of US *de jure* recognition of both Transjordan and the provisional government of Israel should be decided on the basis of progress actually made with regard to Bernadotte's proposals.

On September 16, just before the opening of the General Assembly in Paris, Bernadotte submitted his report to the secretary-general of the United Nations, Trygve Lie. Bernadotte's premisses were that the 1947 UN partition plan was no longer workable; that the Jewish state was a 'living, solidly

entrenched and vigorous reality', and that the Arab dream of a unitary Arab state was, therefore, no longer realistic. His principal recommendations were to give the whole of the Galilee to the Jews, the whole of the Negev to the Arabs, to attach all the Arab parts of Palestine to Transjordan, to accord Jerusalem a special status under UN supervision, and to ensure the right of the Arab refugees to return to their homes, with adequate compensation for any who might choose not to return.

The day after Bernadotte issued his report, four Stern Gang terrorists ambushed his car in Jerusalem and murdered him. It was a senseless and utterly superfluous act of political violence. The intention behind it was to change the course of history by signalling to the outside world that the Israeli people would not allow any foreigners to dictate their borders and to compel the Israeli government to display greater resolution in asserting Israel's rights. The outside world, however, was shocked by this brutal manifestation of Zionist fanaticism, and the failure of the provisional government of Israel to apprehend the suspects dealt a blow to its authority and credibility abroad. Bernadotte became a martyr in the cause of peace, a UN soldier who had given his life in the service of international morality. Bernadotte's report, which in the normal course of events would have been the subject of bargaining and modifications, acquired the quality of a sacred political testament that had to be honoured as it stood and carried out to the letter.

Following a pre-agreed strategy, George Marshall, the American secretary of state, and Ernest Bevin issued statements establishing the positions of their respective governments firmly behind the Bernadotte plan as a whole. There was no need for Britain to exert any pressure on Abdullah to secure his acquiescence in the settlement advocated by the late mediator. On the contrary, Britain felt she had to restrain Abdullah from playing his hand too forcibly. Her own critics had long been saying that the end of Britain's policy was to enlarge the territory of her satellite, Transjordan, so that she might continue to exercise paramount influence in an area which was strategically important to herself. Such suspicions were likely to be fanned if Britain became too blatant in her advocacy of the enlargement of Trans-

jordan, or if Abdullah appeared too eager to fall in with Bernadotte's wishes.

On this occasion Abdullah was all too painfully aware of the delicacy of his position. As he explained to Wells Stabler, the American vice-consul in Jerusalem, he was surrounded by hostile elements in Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, and to a certain degree in Iraq, who were seeking to destroy him and who criticized every step he made which they considered not in concert with Arab League's decisions. There, as an Arab leader, he was obliged to concur in any decisions made by a majority of the Arab leaders. So far the strength of the Arab Legion had served as a deterrent to any overt conspiracy. Nevertheless, Abdullah feared that any forthright acceptance of the mediator's plan would make his position untenable and that in the storm that such acceptance would cause, he might lose all he had struggled for. There could be no doubt that the king generally favoured Bernadotte's conclusions since he was the principal beneficiary. It could therefore be assumed that Transjordan would be among the first, if not the first, to urge acquiescence by the Arab states to a UN-imposed solution based on the mediator's report.

None of the other Arab states was prepared to accept or acquiesce in a settlement based on Bernadotte's report. Azzam Pasha said flatly that the report was unacceptable to the Arabs. When asked whether a guarantee of international frontiers would not constitute a gain for the Arabs, he responded that guarantee of the frontiers of a state not recognized by the Arabs was of no interest. In any case, UN guarantees meant nothing since the Zionists were defying the UN and would continue to do so. Azzam said he could understand how ambition swayed Abdullah as the tool of the British but he could not understand the attitude of Britain or the United States. Both maintained that they backed the report in the interest of peace and out of friendship for the Arabs. Yet peace was impossible under Bernadotte's plan. The Arabs, he asserted, would continue to resist. If Britain and the United States wished to impose the plan on the Arabs, they would have to send men, planes, and battleships. In no other way could Bernadotte's plan be enforced.

The British delegation in Paris continued to do their utmost to

persuade the General Assembly to endorse Bernadotte's plan. They were faced, however, not only by the determined opposition of both Arabs and Jews, but also, after Truman's re-election, by the withdrawal of the US government from the position it had previously taken on the territorial aspects of a peace settlement for Palestine. The White House now declined to support any resolution involving modification of the November 1947 frontiers without Jewish consent, and this meant keeping the Negev in Jewish hands. Once again the pro-Jewish White House had pulled the rug from under the feet of the pro-Arab State Department. In the end the Assembly's action was confined to the appointment, on December 11, of a Conciliation Commission for Palestine, consisting of the representatives of the United States, France, and Turkey. Britain's elaborate diplomatic strategy for making the Negev part of Abdullah's kingdom was soundly defeated by Arab defiance, unexpectedly effective Jewish resistance, and the peculiarities of the American electoral process.

The All-Palestine government

The international debate over Bernadotte's proposals was accompanied by a noticeable increase in the tension between the Arabs themselves. To thwart Abdullah's ambition, the other members of the Arab League, led by Egypt, began to manœuvre for the creation of an Arab government for Palestine, and succeeded in getting the Political Committee to approve the idea at its meeting which opened in Alexandria on September 6 and lasted ten days. The decision to form an Arab Government of Palestine and the attempt to create armed forces under its control furnished the members of the Arab League with the means for divesting themselves of direct responsibility for the prosecution of the war and of withdrawing their armies from Palestine with some protection against popular outcry. Whatever the long-term future of the proposed Arab Government of Palestine, its immediate purpose, as conceived by its Egyptian sponsors, was to provide a focal point of opposition to Abdullah and serve as an instrument

for frustrating his ambition to federate the Arab regions with Transjordan.

The Arab League, on September 22, announced the formation of an All-Palestine government with its seat in Gaza. Word was sent round to the supporters of the mufti to rally in Gaza and Egyptian troops were sent to Bethlehem to distribute small arms to anti-Hashemite elements. The new administration was headed by Ahmad Hilmi Pasha, who had recently been appointed by Abdullah as military governor of Jerusalem. Hilmi's Cabinet consisted largely of followers of the mufti but it also included a number of prominent Palestinians who had previously supported Abdullah.

On September 30, a Palestinian National Council, with seventy-five representatives, convened in Gaza. Hajj Amin al-Husayni, returning to Palestine after an absence of eleven years, was elected president, while Ahmad Hilmi was confirmed as prime minister. On the following day a declaration of independence was issued for an independent, sovereign, and democratic state with borders defined as 'Syria and Lebanon in the North, Syria and Transjordan in the East, the Mediterranean in the West and Egypt in the South'.

The contrast between the pretensions of the All-Palestine government and its capability reduced it to the level of a farce. It claimed jurisdiction over the whole of Palestine yet it had no civil service, no money, and no army of its own. Even in the small enclave round the town of Gaza its writ ran only by the grace of the Egyptian authorities. Taking advantage of the new government's dependence on them for funds and protection, the Egyptian paymasters manipulated it to undermine Abdullah's claim to represent the Palestinian Arabs in the Arab League and in international forums. Ostensibly the embryo for an independent Palestinian state, the new government, from the moment of its inception, was thus reduced to the unhappy role of a shuttlecock in the ongoing power struggle between Cairo and Amman.

Despite the weakness and geographical isolation of the All-Palestine government, Abdullah took the challenge very seriously. When the government was proclaimed he refused to

recognize it and announced that it would not be permitted to operate in any of the areas occupied by the Arab Legion. He also took steps to formalize his authority over these areas and to organize his own Palestinian supporters in opposition to the government in Gaza. On the very same day that the Palestinian National Council issued its declaration of independence in Gaza, the 'First Palestinian Congress' convened in Amman, its several thousand participants swearing allegiance to the Hashemite monarch. The Amman Congress denounced the formation of the Gaza government as being contrary to the wishes and interests of the Arabs and resolved that no Arab government should be set up for Palestine until the entire country had been liberated.

Initially, the formation of the All-Palestine government revived the mufti's forces known as the Holy War Army (*Jaish al-Jihad al-Muqqadas*). They carried out attacks on UN observers and Israeli troops designed to embroil the Arab Legion in fighting and gave the impression of attempting to create disturbances in the areas occupied by Transjordan especially in and around Jerusalem. Glubb Pasha and King Abdullah feared that these subversive activities would endanger their own control in Arab Palestine and they decided to nip in the bud the growth of this army. In his diary entry for October 3 Glubb noted that:

> The position of Transjordan is extremely awkward. We are still in action against the Jews, the Jerusalem truce is only partially effective, and we have daily casualties in killed and wounded. Yet behind our front line, the Mufti's emissaries are raising armed forces, which are drilling and training, but not taking part in holding the line. Now that the Arab League has declared a number of the Mufti's henchmen to be the sole legal Government of All-Palestine, his retainers in the Jerusalem area have become distinctly hostile to us . . . Our situation is more like Alice in Wonderland—or perhaps Dante's *Inferno*—than real life.

Since the mufti's men were not only menacingly positioned across the Arab Legion's communications but also started actively canvassing for the All-Palestine government, the Transjordanian government decided to act. On October 3, Glubb received a written order from the minister of defence, laying

down that all armed bodies operating in the areas controlled by the Arab Legion were either to be under its orders or to be disbanded. Glubb carried out this order promptly and ruthlessly. Because his Arab officers were likely to balk at carrying out such an unpatriotic task, he sent British officers to surround and forcibly disarm the various units of the Holy War Army. The operation brought the Arabs to the brink of internecine war when they were supposed to be co-operating against the common enemy. But it effectively neutralized the military power of Abdullah's Palestinian rivals and checked the growth of public sentiment in favour of an autonomous Palestinian state.

Israel was content to see the rift develop inside the Arab League but prudently refrained from voicing any opinion for or against the All-Palestine government. The Israeli position regarding the future of the Arab part of Palestine was fluid and ambivalent. In his address to the Provisional State Council, on September 23, Sharett described this part as a 'geographical expression' rather than a political entity. He could detect no process of integration round one political centre which could provide the foundation for an independent regime. One candidate for ruling over this geographical area was the Transjordanian government. Sharett described Transjordan as a country with a governmental apparatus that was quite developed by local standards, enjoying British support, but also possessing intentions of its own that did not always coincide with Britain's intentions. The desire manifested by Transjordan to reach agreement with the Jewish side was cited by Sharett as an example of this yearning for independence. He added that this desire was not in accordance with British advice but essentially contrary to it. This phenomenon, Sharett believed, reflected Transjordan's struggle to liberate herself from the humiliating status of being Britain's tool, and to attain a measure of independence and self-respect.

The other candidate for ruling the Arab part of Palestine was the mufti who, through the provisional government in Gaza, was trying to establish for himself a forward position in one corner of the country. Sharett described this government as utterly dependent on the attitude of the Arab states since it had no

international status, no control over territory, and no effectively organized army. In principle, said Sharett, he and his colleagues preferred a separate government in the Arab part of Palestine to a merger with Transjordan. Such a government would be dependent on Israel, it would preserve the unity of western Palestine, and it would be a barrier to Iraqi penetration. Annexation to Transjordan, on the other hand, carried the risk, in the event of a Transjordanian–Iraqi merger, of a large and powerful Arab neighbour bearing down on Israel. Nor was Transjordan's alliance with Britain a recommendation for allowing her to expand. Yet, if these things were stated in public, it would be inferred that Israel favoured the rule of the mufti over western Palestine. On the other hand, a clear statement of opposition to the All-Palestine government would be taken to imply Israeli support for the annexation of the Arab part to Transjordan. For the time being, concluded Sharett, it was best not to say anything but to follow events with a vigilant eye and be prepared to act, when the opportunity arose, to further Israel's own interests.

Israeli war plans and 'missed opportunities'

The rivalries among the Arab states that gave rise to the so-called All-Palestine government complicated Israel's diplomacy but simplified its strategy. David Ben-Gurion, the man in charge of Israel's strategy, was anxious to exploit the divisions and fissures in the enemy camp in order to extend Israel's gains. He had long been critical of the second truce for the unbearable political and financial burdens it entailed. He saw it as a British device for breaking the will of the new state and undermining its international standing. To make matters worse, Bernadotte's report hovered over Israel's head like Damocles' sword. Jerusalem and the Negev were the most vulnerable targets. Military force, in Ben-Gurion's view, would be decisive in settling the borders of the Jewish state and the future of Jerusalem. Unlike Sharett he was not content to wait on events and limit Israel's struggle against the unlimited truce and Bernadotte's plan to a diplomatic

campaign at the United Nations. He favoured the use of force to capture the Negev, the Old City, and the rest of new Jerusalem, to seize the whole of central and western Galilee, and to enlarge the frontiers of the state in a number of other directions.

The blowing up of the pumping station near Latrun that had helped to bring water from Rosh Ha'ayin to Jerusalem provided a possible excuse for action. The Israelis laid a second pipeline not dependent upon the Latrun pumping station, but this did not justify its destruction. Under the terms of the truce neither side had the right to carry out hostile acts. Knowing that the IDF had grown stronger, Ben-Gurion concluded that they should react militarily to this open violation of the truce by the Arab Legion, the alleged purpose of which was to make the Jews of Jerusalem die of thirst. Ironically, it was nationalistic elements inside the Arab Legion who committed this act in order to subvert the growing co-operation they suspected between Tel Aviv and Amman. The violation of the truce occurred not on orders from Amman but on the initiative of the officers of the 2nd Regiment stationed in Latrun. According to Abdullah al-Tall's account, when these officers heard that Glubb Pasha had granted Bernadotte's request to permit the supply of water to the Jews of Jerusalem, they decided unanimously to blow up the pumping station in Latrun. On the night of August 12, volunteers from the 2nd Regiment carried explosives and blew up the station, thereby discontinuing the supply of water to Jerusalem.

Five days later, Lieut.-Col. Moshe Dayan, who had been selected by Ben-Gurion to replace David Shaltiel as military commander of Jerusalem, ordered an attack to capture Government House. Had it succeeded, this operation would have helped the IDF to encircle the Old City as a prelude to its capture. But Tall's Arab Legion units, assisted by some Holy War Army fighters, repelled the attack and dashed the hopes of the energetic new commander.

On September 24, local Arab fighters, apparently with the encouragement of Arab Legion officers, attacked and captured an IDF position in Modiin but were later dislodged by a counter-attack. Ben-Gurion wanted to use the incident as a pretext for

launching a major offensive on the eastern front. He called a meeting of the General Staff and suggested that they storm Latrun and then push on to Ramallah, Jericho, and the Dead Sea, as well as moving south of Jerusalem to capture Bethlehem and the Hebron region. Yigael Yadin said that it would take some time to prepare for an attack on Latrun and questioned the feasibility of the proposed plan. The General Staff backed Yadin in opposing a frontal attack to storm Latrun and put forward instead an alternative plan for attacking the Iraqi forces in the northern part of the West Bank.

The old differences between the military experts and the prime minister thus reasserted themselves because of his continuing obsession with Jerusalem. They were agreed on the need for seizing the initiative but they could not agree on a target. The prime minister was convinced that the road to Jerusalem would not be secure unless they captured Latrun. The military experts, having made five abortive and costly attempts against their own better judgement, were extremely reluctant to attempt another frontal attack on the fortress of Latrun, preferring the strategy of the indirect approach. Their plan was to attack the Iraqi army in the Triangle from the direction of Jenin and from the north simultaneously. And they could have probably captured the whole of the West Bank by sending a column down from Beisan to move along the Jordan River, cut off the lines of communication of the Hashemite armies, and link up with Jerusalem from the north.

Despite the reservations of the military experts, Ben-Gurion brought his plan for attacking the Arab Legion before the Cabinet on September 26. At the meeting, which was attended by all thirteen members of the Cabinet, Ben-Gurion proposed that they give the General Staff an order to prepare a plan of action for capturing Latrun and contingency plans in case this operation should touch off hostilities throughout the country. Jerusalem's fate, he stated, would not be settled inside Jerusalem itself but outside, in Latrun. Latrun was stuck like a bone in their throat, and it was imperative to remove it and secure the road to Jerusalem. Much blood had been shed in the earlier attempts to take Latrun but their failures in the past did not mean that the

task was impossible. There was a definite possibility, continued Ben-Gurion, that the United Nations would call on Israel to cease fire and withdraw but verbal or written protests could be shrugged off. It was also possible, though less likely, that an attempt would be made to restrain Israel by military force. If an American-European force was despatched, Israel would be compelled to retreat, but Ben-Gurion did not expect the United Nations to back up its protests by force. And in any case it was not a disgrace to submit to force. A third possibility, of the renewal of the war on all fronts, was not unwelcome to Ben-Gurion for it would have provided the IDF with the opportunity to capture the whole of the Galilee, break the Egyptian blockade of the Negev, defeat the Iraqi forces in the Triangle and move the border further east to the mountains of Samaria, and widen the corridor to Jerusalem.

In the Cabinet Ben-Gurion's proposal met with strong opposition and was eventually defeated by seven votes against six. In later years Ben-Gurion described this vote as the greatest missed opportunity of the 1948 war. He lamented the decision of his own Cabinet as a cause for 'mourning for generations to come' because it left Transjordan in possession of the Judean mountains, of the roads to Jerusalem, and of the Old City itself. He presented himself as the bold and far-sighted statesman intent on enlarging the borders of his country but, being also a democratic leader, had no choice but to bow to the will of the pusillanimous and misguided majority. That Ben-Gurion's plan was bold and far-reaching cannot be doubted. The defeat of the Legion would have forced the Iraqi army to retreat behind the Jordan and to leave the whole of the West Bank in Israeli hands. But if there was so much at stake, why did Ben-Gurion make no attempt to mobilize the support of his party colleagues in order to secure a Cabinet majority for his plan?

The answer must surely be that Ben-Gurion himself had second thoughts and was not fully committed to carrying through his own plan to its logical conclusion. And it is tempting to conclude that Ben-Gurion abandoned the idea of capturing the West Bank because it was contrary to the agreement reached with King

Abdullah before the outbreak of the war. But there is no evidence to prove that this was the principal reason. Ben-Gurion's behaviour did not suggest that he considered himself bound by this agreement following the outbreak of war. Had he considered himself to be in any way committed to the original Zionist–Hashemite agreement, he would have hardly made a proposal that struck at the very heart of it.

Other reasons must therefore be sought to account for Ben-Gurion's ultimate caution. One reason was the fear of adding to the Jewish state hundreds of thousands of Arabs. This demographic danger would have certainly entered Ben-Gurion's calculations but it was not weighty enough on its own to determine his policy. Uppermost in his mind, in all probability, was the fear of British military intervention on Transjordan's side in the war with Israel under the terms of the 1946 Anglo-Transjordan Treaty. Added to this was his reluctance to antagonize the United States by what might be seen as an overt act of aggression on the part of Israel to extend her borders. Last but not least there was his concern with the future of the Negev after Bernadotte had made his recommendations and the higher priority he probably accorded it over his other territorial aims.

In short, not one but several reasons combined to induce Ben-Gurion to abandon, at least temporarily, his plan for the capture of the West Bank. It is quite possible and even probable that the hope of resuming co-operation with the ruler he once called 'the friend' influenced his decision but it would be a mistake to try and explain his contradictory behaviour in September 1948 solely in terms of this hope.

11

War and Politics

Israeli war plans and Egyptian peace feelers

After the defeat of his plan for an operation against the Arab Legion in the Jerusalem–Hebron area, Ben-Gurion showed growing interest in the idea of a military offensive against the Egyptian forces in the Negev. The situation in the Negev was worrying. Below the Egyptian front line, which stretched in a wide arc from Rafah to the outskirts of Jerusalem, there were twenty-six Israeli settlements in the northern part of the Negev, The Egyptians, in contravention of the terms of the truce, placed the Israeli settlements under siege by preventing the passage of Israeli convoys through their territory. Beyond the immediate problem of supplying the settlements loomed the much greater danger that lack of effective control over the Negev would be used, as Bernadotte had proposed in his last testament, for detaching the Negev altogether from the State of Israel.

Yigael Yadin as chief of operations and some other members of the General Staff had all along regarded Egypt, not Transjordan, as the principal enemy and were now strongly in favour of a large-scale operation to expel the Egyptian invaders from the Negev. Persuading Ben-Gurion to give top priority to a campaign in the south proved easier than Yadin expected. Yigal Allon, who was well aware of Ben-Gurion's obsession with Jerusalem, suggested a two-stage plan of action to the prime minister when the latter visited him at his headquarters in Southern Command on October 5. The objective of the first stage was to force a way through the Egyptian lines to the besieged settlements in the Negev and bring about the collapse of the Egyptian front. Once this was achieved, part of the striking force would branch off to capture Hebron and Bethlehem, cut off the Jerusalem–Jericho road, and link up with the Israeli enclave in Mount Scopus.

On October 6 the Cabinet met to discuss Ben-Gurion's proposal to force open the road to the Negev. Ben-Gurion described the serious situation that had developed in the south as a result of the Egyptian blockade and his plan for breaking the siege. It was possible, he observed, that the fighting would spread to the other fronts, though not likely in view of the worsening relations between Egypt and Abdullah. Abdullah did not recognize the government established by the Egyptians in the Gaza Strip since it consisted of supporters of the mufti. Nevertheless, Arab rivalry could conceivably be overcome by a decision of the Arab League —for example, that all the Arab armies must fight. If the fighting remained confined to the south, continued Ben-Gurion, they would be able to gain control of the entire Negev as far as the Dead Sea and thence down to the Red Sea. It might also be possible to capture Hebron and Bethlehem and improve the Israeli position round Jerusalem if Arab forces did not come down from the north. The government endorsed the plan subject to approval by Foreign Minister Sharett who had departed in the meantime for the General Assembly session in Paris. The date for the operation was fixed for October 14. In his diary Ben-Gurion recorded: 'We took in the Cabinet today the most serious decision since we decided to proclaim the establishment of the state.' What the prime minister omitted to mention was that he had also had word from Sharett about an Egyptian peace feeler.

The Egyptian peace feeler was the product of Elias Sasson's assiduous letter writing and indefatigable efforts in search of an understanding with the ruling classes of the Arab countries. In the case of Egypt, disillusion in political circles with the war in Palestine ensured that Sasson's persistent pleas for a political settlement did not fall on deaf ears. Differences of opinion persisted, however, between the government and the royal court. King Farouk, it should be remembered, had decided personally to go to war in May 1948 against strong opposition from the government and the army. Dynastic ambitions and the desire to limit Abdullah's territorial gains featured prominently in the decision to intervene. Now, however, Farouk was looking for a way out of a war in which the Egyptian army had not distinguished itself.

The government headed by Mahmud Nuqrashi realized that the existence of the State of Israel would have to be accepted sooner or later but it was not ready to say so publicly yet. Nor could it accept any portion of Palestine without betraying the declared purpose of the intervention which was to secure Palestine for the Palestinians. King Farouk, on the other hand, was interested in acquiring a portion of Arab Palestine either in exchange for acquiescing in the Bernadotte plan or even by means of a bilateral deal with the Zionist enemy.

Kamal Riad, a representative of the Egyptian court, called on Sasson in his Paris hotel on September 21. He had been sent very suddenly by order of King Farouk to examine the possibility of a separate settlement between Egypt and Israel. The basic conflict between the ambitions and the outlook of the Egyptians and Transjordanians that had surfaced during the recent Arab League meeting in Alexandria apparently persuaded the king and his supporters that Egypt's good required an independent foreign policy, outside the framework of the Arab League. Riad did not deny that the Egyptian government maintained the mufti and supported his political plans. But it had no illusions about the effectiveness of this move, which had been taken, he claimed, not to upset Israel but to settle accounts with the Hashemite bloc, whose superiority over all the other Arab armies had been demonstrated in the course of the war with Israel. If this bloc was to acquire the Arab part of Palestine and the Negev,it would be able to threaten Egypt's independence—a situation that would have been inconceivable a few months previously. At the end of the meeting Riad asked whether Israel would be interested in a separate agreement with Egypt. In his view the time was ripe but the basis for such an agreement should be proposed by Israel, not by Egypt, and that was the purpose of his visit.

An elated Sasson immediately set about drafting in French a fourteen-point peace treaty on the basis of general guidelines he had received from Sharett previously. The draft treaty was transmitted to Riad who, after informing the court and consulting three political and military advisers of the Egyptian delegation to the United Nations, submitted written 'elucidations and

observations'. During Riad's next meeting with Sasson, on October 2, it emerged more clearly that the Egyptians were thinking seriously about the annexation of the southern part of Palestine to Egypt. This area was allegedly needed for two reasons: so that in the event of an armed clash with Israel they would be able to fight on Palestinian land and not on their own territory, and, secondly, to prevent the annexation of this area to Transjordan and its conversion into a British base. It was for this reason, explained Riad, that the Egyptian government supported the All-Palestine government. He requested detailed assurances to dispel the triple Egyptian fear generated by the establishment of the State of Israel —of territorial expansion, economic domination, and communist infiltration.

Sharett sent a copy of all this important material, including his own reply to the points raised in the Egyptian paper, to the director-general of the Foreign Ministry, Walter Eytan. Sharett noted that implicit in the Egyptian paper there was recognition of Israel, agreement not to subvert it, to evacuate Israel territory, not to demand the return of the refugees, and to consider changing the name of the Arab League to the Oriental League. Much more explicit was the Egyptian desire to annex the coastal strip and a strip of territory in the south and in the Negev. Sharett refrained from giving a clear-cut reply on this sensitive point. He tried to steer a middle course between an irreversible commitment and a complete rejection that might scuttle the negotiations. For him this was the crucial point on which largely hinged the possibility of talking to the Egyptians in defiance of both the British and the Transjordanians. Sharett was inclined to give a qualified agreement because this was the only reward they could offer Egypt, all the talk about economic co-operation being empty rhetoric. He instructed that the whole matter be brought before Ben-Gurion urgently.

The senior officials in the Foreign Ministry all looked favourably on the talks with Egypt. The prime minister, however, did not seem to appreciate this diversion from the task of preparing for the war against Egypt. His rejection of the Egyptian request, at any rate, was emphatic and uncompromising. He

cabled Sharett to say that although he appreciated the importance of friendly relations with Egypt and the continuation of the negotiations, they should under no circumstances agree to the annexation of the coastal strip by Egypt. Egypt, he wrote, was Israel's only large and densely populated neighbour and it was good that desert should separate them. Annexation of the coastal strip by Egypt would also create a dangerous precedent for the annexation of the Galilee by Lebanon. The scheme would also antagonize Britain and Abdullah unnecessarily. If Egypt was genuinely interested in excluding Abdullah and the British from central Palestine and the Negev, she should co-operate with Israel in creating an independent Arab state in Palestine which would join them as a member of an Oriental League. For Ben-Gurion this was the end of the matter. He had no positive suggestions for furthering the negotiations with the representative of the Egyptian court. Instead he urged Sharett to give his observations on the government decision of October 6 regarding the offensive in the south.

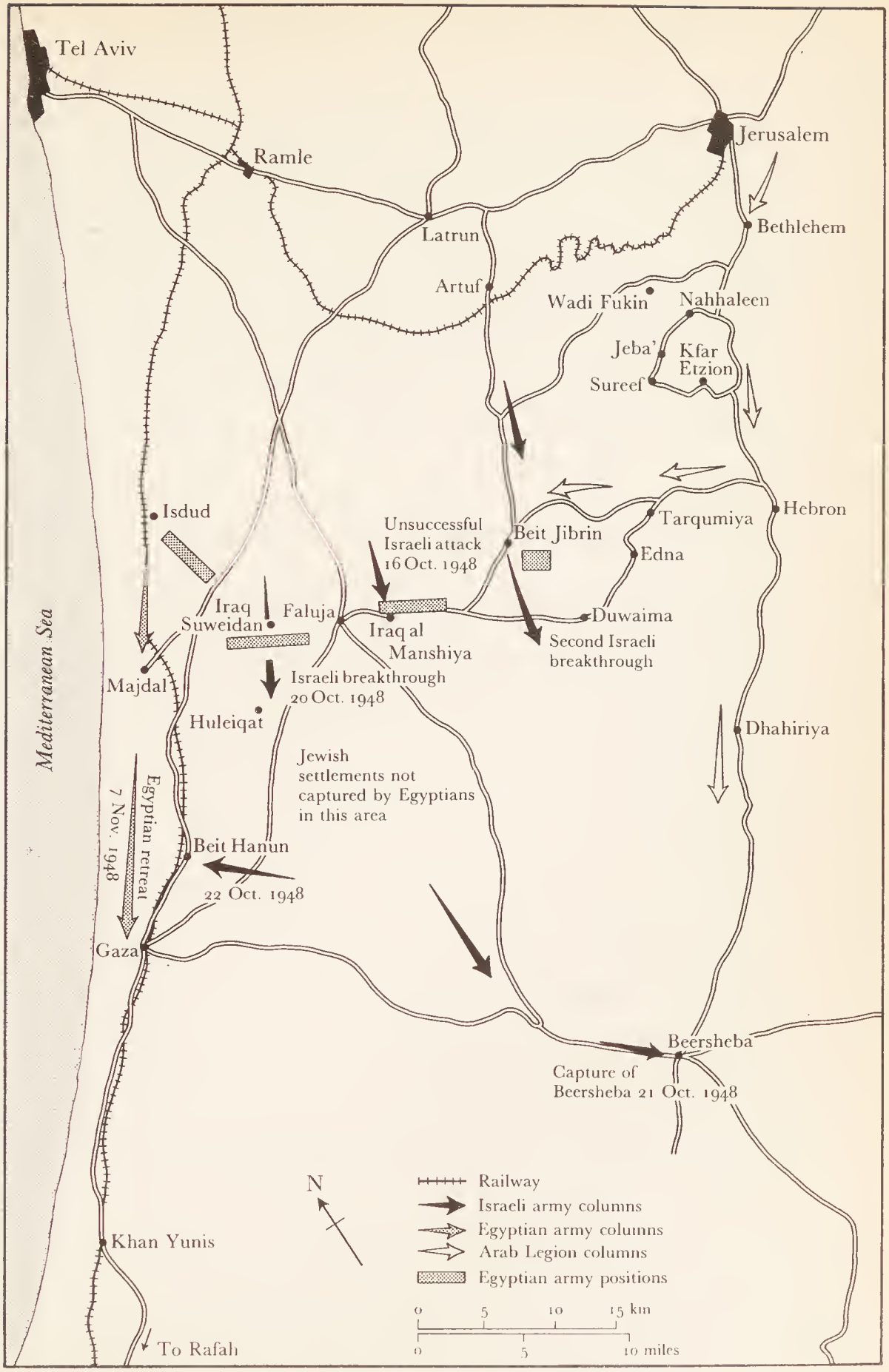
It seems that Ben-Gurion did not take the Egyptian peace feeler seriously because he did not even report it to the Cabinet. He may have feared that this indication that the royal court was open to the idea of peaceful coexistence with Israel might lead some of the hesitant members of his Cabinet to reconsider their support for the imminent war against Egypt. Within the Cabinet there were two latent orientations at that time: one on Egypt and one on the Hashemites. The interesting fact about these two orientations is that they were hardly ever discussed openly, let alone clearly articulated. Ben-Gurion did not encourage a free debate of these big issues, preferring to concentrate on the conduct of the war with as little interference as possible from his ministers or party colleagues. It was a mark of his success in manipulating the national political agenda that no serious debate took place in 1948 on whether Israel ought to have a Hashemite or an Egyptian orientation—not in the provisional government, not in the Provisional State Council, and not in the Political Committee of Mapai.

Ben-Gurion himself was inclined to favour an agreement with

Abdullah, but he was not firmly or unswervingly committed to a Hashemite orientation. Sharett, by contrast, was much more open to the possibility of an agreement with Egypt. It was Sharett who cultivated the link with Abdullah before the war, during the war, and after the war. These efforts were rooted in the knowledge that under existing circumstances Abdullah was the only Arab head of state who acknowledged Israel's right to independence and was prepared to live with her in peace. Yet all along, Sharett recognized that ultimately it was Egypt that held the key to Israel's acceptance or rejection by the rest of the Arab world. That is why he took so seriously the tentative Egyptian peace feeler of September 1948.

The talks in Paris between Elias Sasson and Kamal Riad were fraught with uncertainties, not least in view of the rivalry between the government and the court in Cairo. They were in the nature of preliminary reconnaissance rather than substantive peace negotiations, a beginning rather than a breakthrough. Sharett's approach to these talks was realistic. His main concern was to maintain the dialogue with Egypt. Ben-Gurion, on the other hand, wrote them off from the very start. He may have been right in thinking that nothing of substance would come out of these talks. But he surely owed his Cabinet colleagues at least a report on what had taken place so that they could review their decision to go to war against Egypt on the basis of all the relevant information.

No such report was made to the Cabinet by Ben-Gurion or anyone else. Preparations for the offensive in the south, named Operation Yoav, continued without interruption. On October 15 the Egyptians opened fire on a military supply convoy, giving Israel the pretext she needed for launching a general offensive along the entire front. The fighting lasted seven days, ending when the Security Council's cease-fire resolution entered into force. At the end of this fighting, the road to the Negev was open, Israel extended its control to Beersheba and beyond, the Egyptians suffered heavy losses and an Egyptian brigade was trapped in the Faluja enclave inside the new Israeli front line (see Map 8).



Map 8 The Israeli offensive against the Egyptian army, 15 October 1948

Transjordan and the Israeli–Egyptian war

When Israel launched its attack on Egypt, Arab politics were generally at a very low ebb and Arab leaders almost without exception appeared to be prepared for purely local ends to sacrifice Arab interests in Palestine and to leave their allies in the lurch. King Abdullah's stock slumped partly because he was suspected of wanting to do a deal with the Jews and partly as a result of a deliberate campaign by the Arab leaders to turn him into a scapegoat for the failure in Palestine. The antipathy towards him exhibited by King Farouk was particularly poisonous and the relations between their countries were like those of enemies on the brink of war.

The Israelis were oblivious neither to the tension between Transjordan and Egypt nor to the strategic luxury it might yield of a war only on one front. Abdullah's own attitude towards Israel was somewhat paradoxical during this delicate phase in his relations with the Arab League. On the one hand, he feared a major Israeli offensive which the Arab armies were in no position to contain. On the other hand, an Israeli offensive could be of some benefit if directed solely against the Egyptian forces in the south. Recognition of the All-Palestine government by Egypt and the other members of the Arab League placed both Israel and Transjordan in a peculiar position. Abdullah watched the activities of the Egyptian army closely, believing them to be related to the formation of the puppet government in Gaza. As the American representative reported from Tel Aviv, there was a good chance that if war resumed in the south Abdullah might stand by and let the Israeli army maul the Egyptian forces in order to eliminate both the Gaza government and the potential Egyptian menace to his territory. The Israelis estimated that they could defeat the Egyptians soundly, provided Abdullah held his Legion back. Neutrality on the part of the Legion could also open up an avenue for a political settlement between Israel and Transjordan.

Glubb Pasha had few qualms about reaping the political benefits of an Egyptian defeat at the hands of the Israelis. He could barely conceal his excitement when the Israeli offensive

opened on October 15. In a private letter he wrote to Col. Desmond Goldie, the commander of the 1st Brigade, Glubb gave his frank assessment of the significance of this development and of the political and military dividends it could be made to yield for their side. Interestingly, the responsibility for starting this war is laid by Glubb at the door of the mufti:

The Mufti's government in Gaza wanted to increase its prestige by starting a fight. For the past week, supported by the Egyptians, the Mufti's irregulars have been shooting at the Jews. The Jews have now got cross and are going to see them off.

Secondly, the Jews are going to try at U.N.O. to get both Galilee *and* the Negeb. The Mufti and the Gyppies [*sic*] have given them just the chance they wanted. They can now break through to Beersheba and occupy both the Negeb and Galilee. How are U.N.O. going to get them out? It looks as if the Gaza government have given the Jews *just* the chance they wanted.

Now if the Jews break through to Gaza and Beersheba, the Egyptians in Hebron will be cut off. We don't want the Jews to capture Hebron too. If we step in and occupy Hebron, we shall have no further political complications in the Hebron area! We shall appear as saviours, to rescue Hebron from the Jews when the Egyptians have run away.

This Jewish offensive may have good and bad sides. It may finally knock out the Gaza government and give the gyppies a lesson. On the other hand, it will make the Jews even more arrogant, and if they knock out the Egyptians, they may turn on us.

Anyway, if we do send someone to Hebron, I don't think we can send the 8th Regiment! This may well mean business, and not be a mere political demonstration . . . Presumably the gyppies cut off in Hebron would co-operate for what they are worth!

I don't see how we could let the Jews occupy Hebron if we could prevent it. At the same time, if the Jews are going to have a private war with the Egyptians and the Gaza Government, we do not want to get involved. The gyppies and the Gaza Government are almost as hostile to us as the Jews!

The Israeli *blitzkrieg* of October 15 pulverized the Egyptian front and cut off the Egyptian forces in Hebron and Bethlehem from the rest of the army that was retreating southwards into Sinai. Two courses of action were considered in Amman when the magnitude of the Egyptian defeat had become apparent. One was

to initiate a diversionary attack in the Jerusalem or Latrun areas in order to draw Israeli forces away from the south. The other was to send reinforcements round the east side of Jerusalem down to Bethlehem and Hebron and thereby secure this area against a possible Israeli advance.

Glubb preferred the second course of action but some of his Arab subordinates in Jerusalem pre-empted by launching an attack on October 18. The purpose of this local attack instigated by Abdullah al-Tall was to deceive the Israelis into thinking that the Arab Legion had embarked on a major offensive in Jerusalem and force them to divert some of their forces from the Negev to Jerusalem. Though Glubb was told that the enemy started the fight, his intelligence service informed him of the deliberate provocation on the part of the 6th Regiment and of the immediate counter-attack launched by the Israelis.

The action of the hotheads of the Legion's 6th Regiment came near to overturning the restraint that by now had been built into the strategy of the top policymakers on both sides. For Ben-Gurion acceded to the request of Lieut.-Col. Moshe Dayan to send two battalions on the night of October 19 to capture the Beit Jala ridge, south of Jerusalem, overlooking Bethlehem and the road to Hebron. Dayan, whose strongest suit was politics rather than military organization and planning, botched the operation, and his men retreated from Beit Jala in some disarray at the first sign of resistance from local snipers. Yigael Yadin, the IDF chief of operations, later singled out this episode as conclusive proof that Ben-Gurion was not bound by any understanding, whether explicit or implicit, with King Abdullah. Though the action was an operational failure, argued Yadin, the most significant fact about it was that it had been personally authorized by Ben-Gurion. The capture of Beit Jala, Yadin continued, would have inescapably led to the capture of Bethlehem and Hebron, and that in turn would have rendered it impossible to partition Palestine because it would have deprived Abdullah of a full and important third of the territory he wanted. All this only went to prove, in Yadin's view, that Ben-Gurion had no political conception of restricting military operations against the Arab Legion, at least

not at this stage, and that he was not bound by any agreement with King Abdullah.

The weakness of Yadin's case stems from the fact that Dayan had not been given a free hand but restricted to one specific objective—Beit Jala—and given only one day for carrying out the operation. Moreover, when Dayan pressed to be given another chance to capture the villages south of Jerusalem all the way to Beit Jala and put their inhabitants to flight, and a majority on the General Staff supported this plan, Ben-Gurion ruled against it. The reasons given by Ben-Gurion for this negative decision were predominantly political in character and disclosed a clear wish not to provoke the Arab Legion. The proposed attack, he said, was liable to draw the Legion and the Iraqis into the battle and to counteract the impression of Egyptian isolation and of a rift in the Arab League.

Similar considerations prompted Ben-Gurion to veto Yigal Allon's plan to extend the gains made in the first stage of Operation Yoav by sending a force to capture or at least encircle Hebron and advance towards Jerusalem from the south. That such an expedition was feasible from the military point of view, no one doubted. Ben-Gurion and his army commanders also knew, from monitoring enemy radio communications, that the Arab Legion units in the Jerusalem area were under clear instructions not to intervene on the side of the Egyptians. So small were those units that even if they had been ordered to intervene, they would have been no match for the Palmach fighters who were champing at the bit. The most plausible explanation for the veto of an exceptionally promising military plan is that there were overriding political considerations, chief among which was Ben-Gurion's desire to preserve Transjordan's neutrality in the war between Israel and Egypt. And there can be little doubt that by pulling back his forces from Mount Hebron, Ben-Gurion helped indirectly to reinforce Abdullah's and Glubb's inclination to stay out of the 'private war' between the Israelis and the Egyptians.

Having overcome the little local difficulty he had with the officers of the 6th Regiment in the Old City of Jerusalem, Glubb proceeded, on October 21, to send reinforcements to hold Beit

Jala and Bethlehem and a hastily improvised column, consisting of two companies of infantry and a squadron of armoured cars, to Hebron. The thinking behind this move, as he explained in another long letter to Colonel Goldie, was a compound of military, political, and economic calculations:

If the enemy were to take Bethlehem and Beit Jala, our troops in the south would be cut off.

Kirkbride also sent for me today and told me that he thought that for political and economic reasons, it was essential not to let the Jews take Bethlehem or Hebron.

Politically we should have another Lydda and Ramla, especially as the King ordered me to send a Regiment there two days ago! It would again be me who had betrayed the Arab cause.

Economically it would mean another 50,000 to 100,000 refugees. Would you therefore please send the armoured cars . . . It looks from the news as tho' the Jews will accept a cease fire in another two or three days, so that they can get the maximum advantage of their victory first.

It is really essential to hold Bethlehem and if possible Hebron for those three days. Please arrange accordingly even if you have to send a company from 8th Regiment or anywhere else, or weaken your front temporarily.

Small as was the force sent into Hebron, in belated compliance with the king's orders, it was adequate to the task of seizing effective control of the area from the hands of the Egyptian soldiers who rejoined the main body of their army in Sinai by way of Aqaba or Amman. Thus, by the time the UN order to cease fire became effective, on October 22, Hebron had been absorbed into the Transjordanian sphere of occupation and any Israeli move to capture it carried the risk not only of international condemnation but the flare up of the entire Transjordanian–Iraqi front.

To forestall such a move, Abdullah asked Wells Stabler, an American member of the Truce Commission, to request his government to inform the Jewish authorities that he had been forced by circumstances to take part in hostilities and that he was now ready to come to some reasonable settlement in regard to Palestine. In his report to the State Department, Stabler listed the points that the king urged him to convey to the Jews:

1. Prior to May 14 he had favored partition and had informally undertaken with Jews to occupy Arab areas of Palestine only, provided Jews remained in their areas.
2. Massacre at Deir Yassin and other provocations had incited all Arabs including himself, and he had entered war with serious intent which he still holds. Arab Legion alone among Arab armies still strong.
3. However he now desires restoration peace and understanding with Jews with whom he believes he could have close relations. He realizes Jews and Arabs can only live peacefully in separate areas with defined boundaries.
4. Palestine question now under jurisdiction and discussion UNGA [UN General Assembly] and all parties must contribute to finding solution in that body.
5. In meantime he hopes Jews will appreciate his sincere desire find solution and refrain from attacking Arab Legion and area occupied by them. Such attacks merely incite further animosity and delay settlement.
6. On his side King has given strict orders Arab Legion must respect truce and must not attack unless attacked. He believes his orders are being obeyed.
7. King said except for contact with Jews through Prince Abdel Majid Haidar, Transjordan Minister to London, and Sasson of Israeli Foreign Office, he had not requested anybody previously to convey his views to Jews.

Abdullah could not be certain that the Americans would transmit his message, or, if they did, that the Israelis would take the bait of separate negotiations and refrain from attacking his forces in the Judean mountains round Hebron. So later in the day he phoned the regent of Iraq and said he wished to discuss with him defence against Jewish aggression, a possibility he feared would occur as soon as the Jews had polished off the Egyptians. Abdullah invited the regent, and through him the prime ministers of Egypt and Syria, to urgent consultations in Amman.

The regent, the prime ministers of Egypt and Syria, and their military advisers arrived in Amman on October 23 but nothing

was achieved in their two-day summit meeting. The discussions sound like a scene from *Alice in Wonderland*. At the first meeting Nuqrashi Pasha took the wind out of everybody's sails by saying that the situation in the Egyptian Army was excellent and that it was moving forward to further victories. This was rather a surprise because Azzam Pasha had previously issued an appeal for help to all the members of the Arab League in the name of Nuqrashi and his defence minister. At the second meeting, which included the military chiefs, the Egyptian premier totally reversed his position by tabling a complaint that no one had come to the assistance of the Egyptian forces when they were attacked and demanding that plans should be made to ensure that this unfortunate occurrence was not repeated. The Syrian premier, Jamil Mardam, then produced an offer to capture Nazareth and Safed if the Iraqis would move up to Afuleh. This offer left everyone speechless once more, but it did enable the Iraqis to decline on the grounds that they could play a more useful role by taking over the Latrun area from the Arab Legion and so freeing Legion units to move to Hebron and Bethlehem and fill the gap there. The meeting ended without any decision being taken on any subject at all.

The Israelis were in a buoyant mood as a result of their victory over the Egyptian army, and the spectacle of Arab disunity only added to their joy. The new mood was reflected by Gideon Rafael in a letter he wrote on October 25 to another Israeli diplomat suggesting that 'the rift between Egypt and Transjordan is now so deep that Abdullah and his British wire-pullers prefer an Israeli victory over Egypt than Egyptian occupation even of a small portion of the Negev . . . We are now not engaged at all with Abdullah and have our full freedom of movement. I personally feel that Abdullah has missed the bus for getting an overall understanding with us, and therefore we have to look for other forces in the Middle East which are less dependent on Great Britain.'

A day after this assessment was penned, Dean Rusk of the State Department conveyed Abdullah's six-point message offering separate peace talks to the youthful and ebullient Abba Eban who represented Israel at the UN. But before this message could reach

Tel Aviv, Moshe Sharett ordered Elias Sasson, who was still in Paris, to make a protest to Abdullah about Arab Legion interference with Israeli food supplies to the enclave on Mount Scopus and counsel him to learn from the Egyptian experience and show reasonableness in time rather than repent uselessly later. The king was to be told that so far the Israelis had left the Arab Legion alone but unless the convoys to Mount Scopus were allowed to operate regularly, they would be constrained to take effective and comprehensive action. Sasson made these points, though not so bluntly, in a telegram to Abul Huda, concluding with the hope that the Transjordanian authorities would take the necessary measures in order to maintain quiet in the Holy City and facilitate the efforts of those seeking a peaceful solution. The reply from Amman stated that the agreement reached in the presence of the UN observers was still in force and that the Arab Legion was under standing orders to observe it. The next day, to the surprise of the U N observers in Jerusalem, Israeli convoys were allowed unrestricted passage, and the local commander of the Arab Legion waived his earlier demand for the withdrawal of the Israeli 'policemen' who had remained on Mount Scopus under the terms of the original agreement.

Nevertheless, the Israelis' response to the American offer to mediate between Abdullah and themselves remained noncommittal. Rusk was informed that Israel's general policy was to refrain from attacking the Arab Legion so long as the Legion did not start. The problem, however, was complicated by the Iraqis who, under the same command, allegedly kept attacking at various points. Rusk was asked whether Abdullah's undertaking applied to the Iraqis as well. Eban also showed Rusk the exchange of telegrams between Elias Sasson and Amman. In Eban's view this exchange illustrated the value of direct contact between the parties; the possibility of effective action if the UN mediator's services were dispensed with; and the necessity of direct negotiations in working for a settlement.

In Amman, however, it was far from clear whether the Israeli telegram was intended to further a peaceful settlement or provide an excuse for an offensive action against the Arab Legion. This

small army was dangerously overstretched following the collapse of the Egyptian front and the Iraqi army's refusal to extend its front to take over Latrun and thereby release Legion units for the defence of Hebron. Meanwhile, the Israelis had reduced the Syrian army to impotence in the north, knocked Qawukji's Arab Liberation Army out of the fight, and, not content with banishing the Lebanese army from the Galilee, chased it across the frontier and captured fourteen villages in southern Lebanon. Thus, by the end of the month, the tide had turned very dramatically and menacingly against the Arabs.

King Abdullah convened a special meeting of his Council of Ministers, on the night of November 2, to discuss the position of the Arab Legion in Palestine. Glubb Pasha was asked to report and gave the opinion that, after the withdrawal of the Egyptian forces, the Arab Legion, with nothing but ammunition for small arms, would be unable to maintain its positions if attacked by the Jewish forces. He added that, in his view, the supply of artillery and mortar ammunition would not alter that fact as the preponderance of strength on the Jewish side was now too great. The meeting also felt that in their present state of nerves, the Iraqi forces would do nothing to assist the Arab Legion if the latter came under attack.

After this meeting, the prime minister went to see Sir Alec Kirkbride to put through him a question to Bevin: if attacked by Jewish forces, would the provisions of Article 3 of the Anglo-Transjordanian Treaty of Alliance apply and the United Kingdom come to Transjordan's aid? He went on to say that if the reply was that the treaty only applied to the defence of Transjordan's territory, the Transjordanian government would have to consider the alternatives of withdrawing the Arab Legion from Palestine or of negotiating with the Jews. He added that the final choice would have to rest with King Abdullah.

Bevin was sufficiently alarmed to consider British military intervention in Palestine, yet he carefully refrained from making any definite promises to the king and prime minister of Transjordan. In his reply Bevin mentioned some practical measures that were under consideration such as the sending of a sloop to

Aqaba and the despatch of war materials to Amman to be held by the RAF pending further instructions. He also repeated the assurance of British readiness to help, under the terms of the treaty, in the event of an attack on Transjordan's territory. But he could give no assurance that British troops would be sent into Palestine to repel a Jewish attack on the Arab Legion, if one were to take place. This latter contingency was not covered by the treaty, nor had it been addressed by Bevin and Abul Huda at their secret meeting in London because at that time both parties to the collusion had expected a peaceful, not a violent, partition of Palestine.

The upshot was that the king and his ministers could not be sure what the British reaction would be if the Israelis chose to round up their victories in the south and the north of Palestine with an attack on the Arab Legion. The practical steps mentioned by Bevin were too puny and too grudging and his reply to the key question regarding help in Palestine was too evasive to deflect the king from pursuing the alternative of negotiating with the enemy.

12

The Friendly Belligerents

Diplomacy and force

The weakness of the Arab Legion and the prospect of its annihilation in renewed fighting in Palestine gave its master a powerful incentive to negotiate with the Israelis. The road to negotiations, however, was strewn with pitfalls and obstacles. So while proceeding along this road, King Abdullah could not afford to ignore the views of his own government, the obligations imposed by membership of the Arab League, the feelings of the Palestinians, or the advice of Great Britain.

Palestinian opinion had shifted perceptibly in favour of merging the Arab parts of Palestine with Transjordan, partly as a result of disillusionment with the Arab governments. The misfortunes of the Egyptian army in the Negev and the hasty withdrawal of the Egyptian-backed All-Palestine government from Gaza diminished such slender dominion as that government had succeeded in establishing over the Arabs of Palestine. The political trimmers in Palestine concluded that the prospects of an independent Arab state were receding, while union with Transjordan appeared more probable and perhaps more profitable. Among the more educated Palestinians the dislike and mistrust of Abdullah persisted. Musa Alami, for example, doubted whether any Palestinian whose mind rose above petty politics would find scope in a unified kingdom since Abdullah intended to treat Arab Palestine not as the second element of a dual monarchy, as in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but as a straight colony to be administered from Amman. The upshot, however, was to present Abdullah with an opportunity of rehabilitating himself with the Arabs of Palestine. The logic of events had spoken in favour of the king's realism as opposed to the bombastic self-deception of

the other Arab countries. A number of delegations of Arabs from Palestine approached the king requesting that he undertake negotiations. Some even said that if he would not negotiate with the Jews, they would.

The Israelis for their part were in no particular hurry to enter negotiations and under no pressure to make any concessions. Whereas the cockiness displayed by the Arabs before the Negev offensive had given way to a willingness to face facts and seek an end to the conflict, the Israelis, in the words of one British observer, were 'cock-a-hoop'. Militarily they could do whatever they wished, and there was a great deal more that some of their leaders still wished to achieve.

Ben-Gurion was sufficiently emboldened by the capture of Galilee and the banishing of the Lebanese army and Qawukji's irregulars to start making plans for rolling back the Hashemite armies across the Jordan. His plan was to start with the Triangle by applying pressure on Jenin and Tulkarem and then, if Nablus could be captured, to proceed from there to Ramallah. His diary entry for October 31 reveals that he was playing for big stakes and that his ultimate aim was Jerusalem: 'If we reach Nablus, Ramallah will fall by itself and Jerusalem will be liberated, the Legion will flee to Transjordan and the whole country will be in our hands.'

On November 4, however, the Security Council passed a resolution calling on the combatants in the Negev to withdraw their forces to the lines of October 14 and threatened to take unspecified further measures if either party failed to comply. Eager as he was for further conquests, Ben-Gurion re-evaluated his policy in the light of this vague threat of international action. To the General Staff, he explained that the stand of the Security Council, and America's tendency to follow the British Foreign Office, raised doubts in his mind concerning the planned campaign in the Triangle. Consequently, he shifted his support from the big plan for capturing the northern Triangle and Jerusalem to a smaller plan for enlarging the territory held by Israel in and around Jerusalem.

During this period Moshe Sharett began to voice some doubts

about the wisdom of some of Ben-Gurion's more ambitious military plans. The two men had worked very effectively in double-harness during the early stage of the war, but now that military ascendancy had widened the scope for political choice, differences between them began to emerge just below the surface. The most significant difference concerned the use of force against the Arab Legion and the future of the West Bank.

When the prime minister tried to spur the Cabinet on to order the capture of the Triangle, Sharett demanded that three factors be taken into consideration: (*a*) it would preclude the option of an Arab state in western Palestine, or even a rump state for annexation to Transjordan, and this would stretch to the absolute limit the departure from the UN partition resolution of 29 November 1947; (*b*) it would facilitate immeasurably the pressure of the Western powers on Israel to concede the Negev; and (*c*) it would give the problem of the Arab refugees catastrophic proportions.

Differences at the top greatly complicated the task of the officials responsible for the implementation of Israel's Middle Eastern policy. The conflicting pulls and the consequent confusion were laid bare by Yaacov Shimoni, the deputy head of the Middle East Department at the Foreign Ministry, in a letter of November 2 to his boss, Elias Sasson, who continued to maintain the contact with various Arab quarters from Paris. Shimoni began by recalling that Moshe Sharett had ordered them to encourage the inhabitants of the Arab part of Palestine to form an independent government of their own or to rebel against the extremist Arab line by concluding a pact with Israel. A number of emissaries were accordingly sent to the Arab parts, and especially to the Triangle, and their reports painted a rosy picture. According to these reports, the Arabs of Palestine had despaired of the Arab League, the Arab countries, the Arab armies, the mufti, the Gaza government, and Abdullah. They craved for peace and were ready to start talks to see if a basis could be found for understanding and co-operation with Israel. A number of prominent people offered their services as go-betweens in bringing the rest of the Palestinian leadership to peace talks with

Israel. These reports gave rise to a welter of reactions and considerations, some of them contradictory, at the receiving end:

> What shall we ask of them: an open Palestinian government? With Abdullah? Against Abdullah? A government-in-exile with us? An underground? An uprising and rebellion? Preparation of the ground for our conquest? And what about the borders—a problem that is bound to surface and come up in every discussion of this kind? And in the meantime our army is in any case doing its duty from the military point of view and is creating important and surprising political facts, without taking into account our own political thoughts, which are becoming more out-dated day by day. For what happened yesterday in the Galilee and the day before yesterday in the Negev, is liable to happen tomorrow in Hebron and the day after tomorrow in the Triangle. And BG [Ben Gurion] altogether treats with severe scepticism, almost dismissively, such political plans and one has the impression that he seeks to solve most of the problems by military means, in such a way that no political negotiations and no political action would be of any value.

In a discussion with Sharett, Shimoni expressed the opinion that the Palestinians could not seriously be expected to form an open government in defiance of the entire Arab world, or alternatively to go underground, and, consequently the most realistic suggestion that Israel could make to them was to reach an understanding with one of the Arab states and co-operate with Israel in reaching an agreement with that state. As far as the Triangle was concerned, the obvious party was Abdullah. Moreover, the practical possibility for creating an independent Palestinian state diminished with every successive Israeli conquest. Sharett did not disagree but he still valued the tactical advantage of the threat to help in establishing such a state for future negotiations either with Abdullah or with Egypt. No firm conclusion was reached on this occasion on how to proceed. Sharett simply promised to give further thought to this problem and to consult with the other policymakers.

By this time, however, Ben-Gurion's scepticism had hardened into outright opposition against any plan for organizing the West Bank into a separate political entity. Whereas Sharett was flexible and wanted to keep open all the options, including that of a small

and weak Palestinian state allied to Israel, Ben-Gurion ruled out an independent Palestinian state in any shape or size, leaving open only two options: the conquest of the West Bank by Israel or its annexation to Transjordan. On October 21, when Ezra Danin discussed with him the Foreign Ministry Arabists' project of setting up a puppet state in the Triangle, Ben-Gurion bluntly declared: 'We will not embark on any new adventures. The Arabs of the Land of Israel have only one function left to them: to run away.' With these words he rose and terminated the conversation.

Peace overtures

Just as the attempt got under way at the Foreign Ministry in Tel Aviv to resolve the contradictions in Israel's Arab policy, Elias Sasson was approached in Paris with a message from the Egyptian royal court. The messenger was Kamal Riad who had once before approached Sasson with peace feelers, prior to the launching of Operation Yoav. Now he contacted Sasson again on behalf of the court to say that Egypt was prepared to sign a fully-fledged armistice with Israel which would remain in force until a final political settlement was reached. Egypt's conditions for signing the armistice agreement were that Israel would withdraw from all captured areas in the south that were not within the boundaries of the State of Israel, and would agree in advance that the entire coastal strip from Isdud to Rafah, including Gaza, as well as the inland strip from Rafah south-east along the border, would remain in Egyptian hands. On the other hand Riad was confident that Egypt would agree not to budge in the event of renewed warfare between Israel and any other Arab state. Although Transjordan was not mentioned by name, it was clear enough from the context that, provided the price was right, Egypt was now prepared to sell out her erstwhile ally. Transjordan, after all, had been first to abandon Egypt to Israel's tender mercies during Operation Yoav. Egyptian neutrality in a war between Israel and Transjordan would thus simply even the score. Secondly, Riad was confident that a way would be found to recognize Israel *de facto*. He explained that the proposed

armistice negotiations would be military in character and conducted by military men but, if successful, they might be followed by political talks. He also offered to arrange for Sasson a meeting with Mahmud Fawzi, Egypt's delegate to the United Nations, so that Fawzi would confirm the offer officially.

A special meeting of the Israeli Cabinet was convened to discuss the Egyptian peace feelers, and Sasson was authorized to meet Fawzi in order to give the talks a more official and binding character. The Egyptians were to be told that the government of Israel was not favourably disposed to the annexation of the Gaza area by Egypt because it feared Egyptian expansionism and believed that the future of Gaza should not be decided upon until there was some decision on the future of the Arab section of Palestine; but that it would probably agree to Egyptian control of the desert area from Rafah south-eastwards, which under the November 1947 resolution was to be part of the Arab state.

Within the Cabinet there was a dispute in progress on whether to initiate peace talks with Egypt first or with Transjordan first. News of the Egyptian peace overture momentarily boosted the position of the 'Egypt firsters'. Mapam, the left-wing party which counted among its members some of the ablest field commanders, favoured Egypt, claiming that Abdullah was a British puppet and Egypt the only independent Arab country. Mapai, the ruling party, tended to prefer Abdullah on the grounds that he was more reliable and realistic.

Before any progress could be made in settling Israel's official order of priorities, increasingly clear signals were received from King Abdullah via Paris about his desire to restore co-operation and enter into negotiations with Israel. On November 9, Abdul Majid Haidar, Transjordan's minister in London, visited Sasson in Paris bearing a message from the king. Firstly, His Majesty hoped that the Israeli side appreciated the arrangements that had been made for free passage through the area held by the Arab Legion to Mount Scopus. Secondly, he assumed that with the advent of winter, the Burma Road (which had been hastily constructed during the first truce to carry supplies to Jerusalem) would become impassable, and that if the Israelis were therefore

to request free passage along the main road in Latrun, the request would be granted. Thirdly, he was worried by the situation in Jerusalem, where the Israeli troops were being aggressive, and he suggested that both sides issue orders to cease firing. Fourthly, he urged restraint on the Iraqi front, where Israeli aggression was liable to provoke attacks. Finally, the king did not object to Israel negotiating with Egypt but he was definitely against Egyptian annexation of Gaza, which he claimed as his outlet to the sea.

The next day another royal emissary visited Sasson in Paris: Abdel Ghani al-Karmi, King Abdullah's private secretary, who had frequently carried messages in the past between his master and the Jewish Agency. Those who had met him remembered him as an amiable and loquacious individual, perpetually short of money and prone to exaggerate his own importance and the value of the services he could render. His anti-British sentiments went down well enough with the Israelis but his partiality to alcohol raised some doubts about his reliability as the conveyor of sensitive messages. Absent-minded though he was, Karmi rarely forgot his hip flask of whisky, and his Israeli hosts generously provided water for his favourite tipple.

Karmi told Sasson that Abdullah was under pressure, from the public as well as the government, to terminate the war and save what could still be saved from the Arab parts of Palestine. But the British would not allow him to begin immediate, official, and direct negotiations so long as the Israelis had not agreed to concede a part of the Negev to meet the strategic needs of the British Empire. The Iraqis, too, wanted to end the war so that they could withdraw part of their army before the onset of winter. It appeared that the Israeli army had struck terror into Arab hearts, and the Iraqis preferred to leave Palestine before it could get the chance to demonstrate its superiority over them too.

Karmi had come to Paris in connection with some land deals, but the king had instructed him to begin negotiations for a final solution to the Palestine problem. He even brought a signed letter from the king to Abdul Majid Haidar, indicating Transjordan's maximum and minimum demands and empowering the two of them—Haidar and Karmi—to start negotiations immediately.

Karmi was reluctant to give details of these demands until he had spoken to Haidar, except to say that the king was pressing for the return of the people of Lydda and Ramle to their homes; but not all of them, only the 'good' ones among them, that is to say, those who were loyal to him and accepted the State of Israel.

Ben-Gurion was clearly much more interested in the royal overture from Amman than in the one from Cairo. He favoured negotiations with Transjordan and agreed to an immediate cease-fire in Jerusalem. He was not interested in the offer of free passage through Latrun because the Burma Road was adequate, but he was definitely interested in acquiring Latrun against territorial compensation elsewhere. He favoured a general straightening of the lines, with the Arabs shifting eastward on the central front in return for Israeli movement westward in the Hebron area. His first reaction was strongly against ceding Gaza to the Egyptians, preferring to give it to Abdullah after it was captured. But he had not made up his mind yet on the method of communication between Gaza and the rest of Abdullah's territory.

Specific problems continued to be handled at a lower level and by direct correspondence with Amman. Elias Sasson wrote to Tawfiq Abul Huda on November 10 expressing Israeli readiness to co-operate in preventing hostilities in Jerusalem and asking that the local commander of the Arab Legion should establish direct contact with the Israeli commander. Sasson also asked that steps should be taken to control the Arab irregulars who were causing all the trouble. The necessary orders were sent to the Arab Legion in Jerusalem and every precaution was taken not to give the Israelis an excuse to attack. A week later Sasson sent Abul Huda a telegram dealing with the protection of the Rutenberg works by the Arab Legion during the approaching flood period of the Yarmouk River. Abul Huda replied that the Transjordanian government was continuing to ensure the passage of Israeli convoys to Mount Scopus and at Bab el Wad but could not offer much assistance in relation to the Palestine Electric Corporation because Naharayim was the responsibility of the Iraqi army. Sasson's next message referred to rumours that the Arab Legion was planning an offensive in Jerusalem and expressed the hope

that these rumours were not true. The prime minister replied that unless attacked, the Arab Legion would not take the initiative in breaking the truce.

In public the Israeli prime minister declared that while his country could win much more territory by resort to arms, she would settle for less if she could have peace. Ben-Gurion said this in an interview with Kenneth Bilby, who had prominently reported in the *New York Herald Tribune* Abdullah's determination to end the war and to begin peace talks. When Bilby had finished giving a firsthand account of his meeting with the ruler of Transjordan, Ben-Gurion said slowly:

> I believe in Abdullah's sincerity. I think he really wants peace. Now if he will just translate his words into action. We are willing to meet him halfway. For the sake of peace we'll take less, even though we might get more.
>
> Abdullah has always gotten on well with some of our people. Shertok was friendly with him. I remember once they even played 'Hatikvah' (the Jewish national anthem) in a theatre in Amman when a group of us were visiting there. We've always been willing to talk with Abdullah and we are now.

A 'sincere and absolute cease-fire' in Jerusalem

Jerusalem, the most explosive flashpoint along the entire Israeli–Transjordanian front, provided the starting point for talks between the two sides. Ben-Gurion was ready to offer a real cease-fire in Jerusalem as the bait to draw Abdullah into comprehensive peace negotiations. This represented a reversal of Ben-Gurion's earlier strategy of bringing the whole of Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty. From September onwards there was no doubt that the IDF's superiority over all the Arab armies placed this goal within Israel's reach, and all Ben-Gurion's military plans had this as their ultimate goal. But by the end of November Ben-Gurion had quietly set aside this goal in favour of the much more limited objective of dividing up Jerusalem with the Arab opponent who had the best credentials for becoming a partner in peace.

Signs of a more conciliatory attitude on the part of the Israeli

authorities had the effect of allaying, without eliminating entirely, Abdullah's fear of an all-out offensive in Jerusalem. When Glubb Pasha asked him his opinion on the Jewish advances for a 'real cease-fire' in Jerusalem, the king, with a twinkle in his eye, invoked a Turkish proverb: 'If you meet a bear when crossing a rotten bridge, call her "dear Auntie"!'

There was a certain similarity in the way that Abdullah and Ben-Gurion approached the talks on the future of Jerusalem. Neither could admit to his own followers or partners that the real purpose of the talks was to reach a compromise with the enemy. Both presented the talks as relating merely to truce matters while personally directing them from behind the scenes on account of their broader political implications. Both worked through young and assertive army officers whose direct manner masked considerable political deviousness.

The king was represented by Abdullah al-Tall, whom he had promoted from major to lieutenant-colonel for the part he played in the battle for Jerusalem and later appointed him as governor of the city. Since Tall had established a reputation for himself as a radical Arab nationalist and an outspoken critic of British control over the Arab Legion, he was an unlikely choice for such a sensitive political mission. Yet the king must have reckoned that he could control the young officer and use him to reduce to a minimum British influence over the talks.

Tall's opposite number in the talks was Lieut.-Col. Moshe Dayan, who had impressed Ben-Gurion during the war as a tough and aggressive combat officer. By his own account Dayan ascribed little importance to the idea of negotiations with the Arabs on assuming the command of Jerusalem. He planned for and expected military decisions. He viewed the problems through fortified posts and trenches and their solution through fire and assault. But when the cease-fire had put an end to the fighting, the struggle passed from the battlefield to the negotiating table and he became deeply involved in political work that brought him into direct contact with the prime minister. Although Dayan was no more successful as a military planner and organizer than his predecessor, he was a more astute and skilful politician. And it

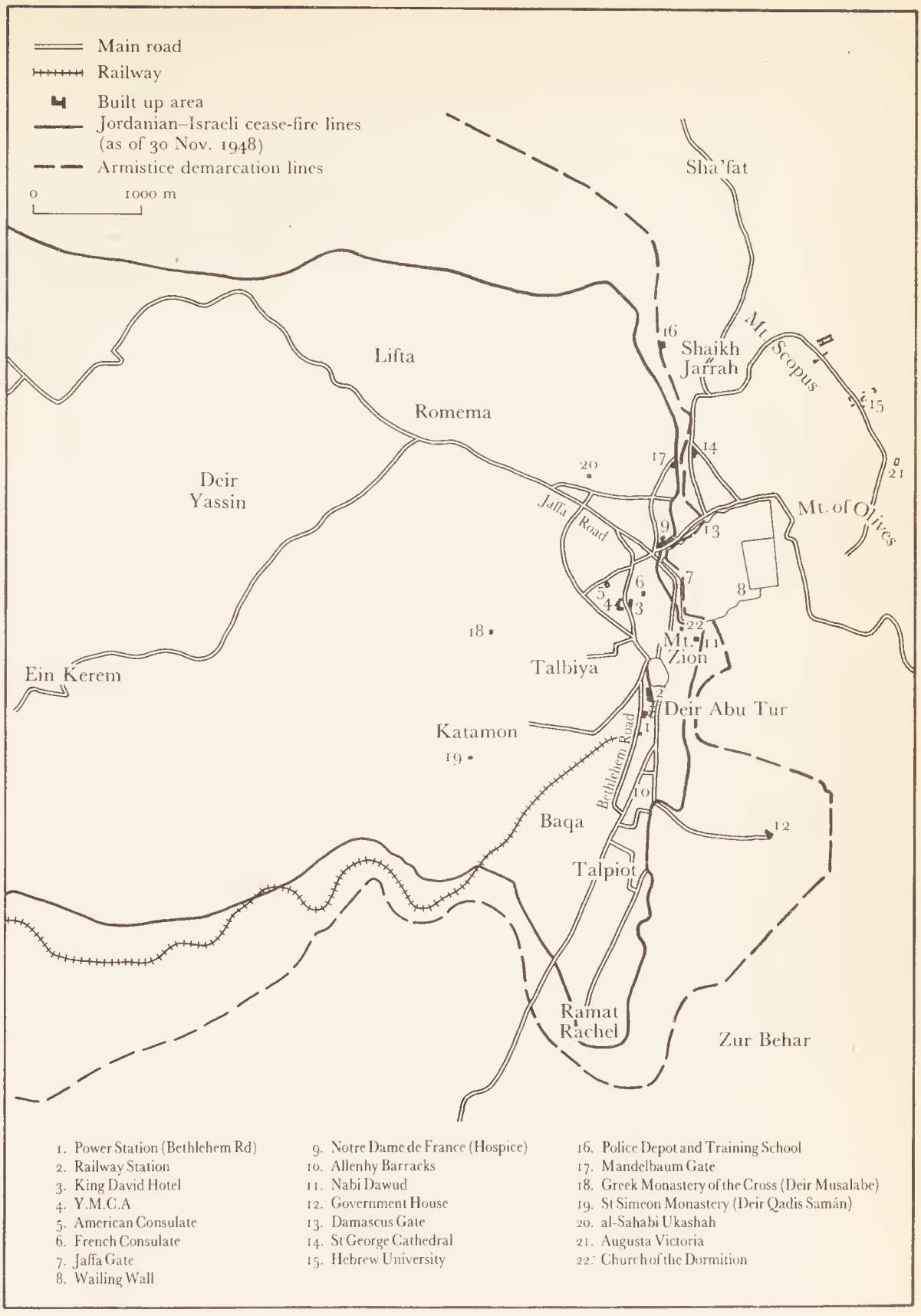
was Dayan's skills as a politician and negotiator that the prime minister exploited to the full in furthering his new aims of reconciliation and partnership with Transjordan.

The lines held in Jerusalem on the eve of the talks were extremely awkward for both sides, with enclaves, bulges, and criss-crossing lines of communication. The fighting had cut the city into two, but the line of demarcation was unnatural and troublesome. Israel held the western part of the city, with an enclave in Mount Scopus. Israel also controlled part of the Jerusalem–Bethlehem road, forcing the Transjordanians to use a longer, secondary route. Transjordan held the eastern half—the Old City, including the Wailing Wall, the Temple compound, and the Jewish Quarter—and the Latrun salient, midway between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

The first meeting between the two military governors of Jerusalem was held in Government House, the former residence of the British high commissioner, on November 29, in the presence of United Nations observers and the three-man Consular Truce Commission. Tall found his opposite number unexpectedly friendly and forthcoming, and tentative agreement was reached on a cease-fire extending from Beit Jala and Bethlehem in the south to Ramallah in the north and Latrun in the west. On the following day, a formal agreement was signed for 'an absolute and sincere cease-fire' covering the entire Jerusalem area and reaffirming the earlier agreement for the supply of the Israeli enclave in Mount Scopus (see Map 9).

On Dayan's initiative, a direct telephone line was established between the two commanders, ostensibly for dealing with local incidents and smoothing misunderstandings but basically for eliminating third-party intervention. Since both sides aspired to direct control in Jerusalem, the bypassing of the UN observers, whose main task was to supervise the cease-fire, helped to clear the decks for the eventual partition of the Holy City between Israel and Transjordan.

The atmosphere during the meeting was indicative of a definite desire on the part of both parties to terminate the fighting in Jerusalem. Both commanders advanced practical suggestions for



Map 9 Jerusalem cease-fire and armistice lines

achieving this objective. In contrast to previous meetings, the cease-fire was approached as a first step to lasting peace rather than in an effort to obtain tactical advantage prior to the resumption of fighting. After the cease-fire agreement had been signed, Ben-Gurion suggested that at the next meeting Dayan should take Tall aside to discuss the railway line and Shaikh Jarrah, through which lay the road to Mount Scopus and Latrun. If arrangements could be worked out, wrote Ben-Gurion in his diary, 'the Jerusalem question will be solved'. This was indeed indicative of a fundamental change of attitude, but it remained to be seen whether arrangements could be worked out peacefully.

Elias Sasson, who had originated the idea of direct negotiations between the military commanders in Jerusalem, regarded the cease-fire agreement as a good omen. In a telegram to Transjordan's prime minister he wrote: 'We welcome the agreement signed recently by our respective commanders in Jerusalem. I hope that just as we overcame the difficulties involved in reaching this agreement, we will likewise resort to logic and reason in order to find a way to reach a general and enduring peace.'

Abul Huda, however, preferred to proceed with caution and with due regard to the attitude of the other Arab states. The Jews were showing a real desire for an accord with Transjordan, but he did not think that the time had come to meet as governments to consider political matters. Having always felt 'safe' as regards the king, the Jews were now evidently trying to involve the government. Abul Huda thought that Abdullah's contact with the Jews through personal emissaries might prove useful when the time came for direct negotiations. If they became known in the meantime, they could be repudiated by the government. The publicity surrounding the talks in Government House was not harmful because they dealt only with truce matters. But if the king chose to undertake negotiations, Abul Huda had no intention of standing in his way and was always ready to resign and make way for a government of negotiation.

Rather than change his government, Abdullah preferred to empower Tall to shift the talks from the strictly military to the political plane. At a meeting on December 5 held in the Armenian

Monastery in the Old City, Tall stated that he had been authorized by the king to offer a partial withdrawal of troops from Latrun and their replacement by a mixed Arab–Jewish police force in exchange for permission to a small number of refugees to return to Lydda and Ramle. Tall also asked that the cease-fire covering Jerusalem should be extended to the entire front between the Arab Legion and the Israeli army. Dayan replied that he had not been authorized to do this, but a gentlemen's agreement was reached to extend the cease-fire for the ten days until they were to meet again. In response to Dayan's earlier suggestion for reopening the Tel Aviv–Jerusalem railway line, Tall agreed but wanted in return permission to use the road from Bethlehem to Jerusalem up to the Jaffa Gate. These proposals fell short of what Ben-Gurion had defined as Israel's minimal requirements. He considered Latrun not as a question of traffic arrangements but of the division of territory. Basically he was opposed to partial arrangements and the reply he gave Dayan to transmit to the king via Tall was that they would not continue discussions merely on the basis of the truce. They were ready to negotiate the conditions for a real peace with a political representative and only in such negotiations would they find solutions to the specific problems of supplying electricity to Jerusalem, opening the railway line, the road to Bethlehem, and so on.

For Abdullah, peace negotiations with Israel posed not so much a question of principle but a problem of timing. He needed Israel's agreement, whether formal or tacit, for his plan to annex the Arab parts of Palestine. The second Palestinian Congress, held in Jericho on December 1, was an important landmark on the road to annexation. It was attended by some 3,000 delegates including the mayors of Hebron, Bethlehem, and Ramallah, military governors of all the districts controlled by the Arab Legion in Palestine, notables from Transjordan, Syria, and Lebanon, and former supporters of the mufti. The promoters of the congress had been encouraged and assisted by the king and government of Transjordan. The congress in its final resolutions expressed no confidence in the Arab Higher Committee or the Gaza government, called for the union of Transjordan and

Palestine under the Hashemite crown, and gave Abdullah power of attorney to solve the Palestinian problem to the best of his ability and as swiftly as possible. These resolutions were ratified by the government of Transjordan on December 7 and by the Parliament in Amman on December 13.

The Jericho Congress constituted a turning point in the evolution of Abdullah's attitude towards negotiations with the new state. Prior to the congress, Abdullah had been deterred by the refusal of the Arab world to accord legitimacy to political talks with Israel aiming at a final settlement; after the congress there were increasing signs that Transjordan was ready for a separate deal with Israel even at the price of creating a rift within the Arab League. The decline in Egypt's political standing following her military defeat no doubt made it easier for Abdullah to choose between the two unwelcome alternatives of isolation in the Arab world and the loss of territories he had occupied in Palestine. He chose the former as the lesser of the two evils in order to preserve most of his gains in Palestine.

Another reason for beginning peace talks as soon as possible was the unfolding of Operation Lot. At the end of November, Jewish forces which had been pushing eastwards and southwards from Beersheba set up a post between the Dead Sea and the Red Sea and sent patrols into Transjordan. The operation was designed to remove the siege on Sdom, at the southern tip of the Dead Sea, where the works of the Palestine Potash Corporation were located, and to prevent the Arab Legion from penetrating across the northern part of Wadi Araba or into the Judean desert from Hebron. Britain drew the attention of the Security Council to these incursions and to her own obligation under the terms of the Anglo-Transjordanian Treaty. But since there was nothing that Britain could do immediately to preserve the territorial integrity of her ally, it was not surprising that Abdullah tried a diplomatic approach. At their meeting on December 5, Tall suggested to Dayan recognition of the mandatory Transjordan–Palestine frontier as the border between their two states up to Husub and a cease-fire arrangement down to Eilat or stabilization of the existing lines along the entire front. Dayan promised

to look into this matter and orders were subsequently issued to all IDF units to observe the cease-fire not just in Jerusalem but along the entire front with the Arab Legion.

Talks with Transjordan and the second offensive against Egypt

A new stage in the talks between Israel and Transjordan began with the return of Elias Sasson from Paris. Sasson, who had been first to suggest direct talks between the two military governors, saw more clearly than anyone else the potential for moving beyond the discussion of technical issues to full-scale peace negotiations. He had always been a great believer in direct contact with Arab leaders and in bypassing third parties in general and the United Nations in particular. He was also one of the leading proponents of the tacit alliance with Transjordan. Upon his return home, he gave Ben-Gurion a comprehensive report on the various talks and contacts he had in Paris and on the political situation in the Arab world. Sasson argued that their aim should be to terminate hostilities and hasten the departure of the Arab armies from Palestine. To secure Abdullah's co-operation in expelling the other Arab forces from Palestine and reaching a final settlement, Sasson recommended giving him Gaza as a free port.

On December 10 Sasson wrote a letter to King Abdullah to announce that he had returned from Paris for a brief visit and was anxious to meet someone close to the king to discuss matters of mutual interest. The letter was handed by Dayan to Tall for delivery to the palace at Shuneh. Tall called Dayan on their direct telephone line the following day to say that he wanted to meet the author of the letter in order to give him Abdullah's reply. With Dayan's help, Sasson and Abdullah al-Tall met in no man's land and conversed in Arabic for nearly half an hour. After conveying Abdullah's warm regards, the young officer stated that His Majesty was ready to start peace talks but wanted to wait ten days to see if he could persuade the other Arab rulers to join in the talks. Sasson wanted to know whether Abdullah would maintain his neutrality in the event of a clash between Israel and one of the

other Arab countries, Iraq for example. Tall stated that as far as he knew the Iraqi army was also interested in a cease-fire, and that the king had told him that the Iraqis knew and approved of his contacts with the Israelis. The meeting ended with Tall's promise to return with Abdullah's answer to the idea of starting either armistice or peace talks.

Colonel Tall made a full report to the king and on December 13 called Sasson to convey the following message: first, the king agreed to a general armistice and to peace talks but, secondly, he needed a week in order to consult the regent of Iraq and in order to find out whether Abul Huda would undertake the task himself or make way for a braver man; thirdly, he urged that Sasson should remain in the country for a week to await his final reply, which promised to be satisfactory; and, finally, he was curious to have Sasson's views on the steps that were being taken by Transjordan to implement the resolutions of the Jericho Congress.

Sasson dictated his reply and a number of additional points which Tall took down in writing to present to the king:

1. If the king was determined to implement the Jericho resolutions, the Israelis had no objection and Sasson thought this ought to be done swiftly in order to present both friends and opponents with a *fait accompli*.
2. When the king proceeded with implementing the Jericho resolutions, he should make no mention of the Jewish side either for good or for ill. He could simply state that he was taking steps to save what could be saved and to restore peace and happiness to the people of Palestine.
3. In carrying out the Jericho resolutions, it would be undesirable for the king to stake a final position regarding the fate of Jerusalem, old or new.
4. Sasson advised the king to consent to a general armistice before proceeding to implement the Jericho resolutions. Such a move would enable him to withdraw his troops from Palestine and employ them on other fronts—the Egyptian or Syrian, for instance. If the current circumstances in the Arab world did not

permit him to proclaim an official armistice, a secret armistice agreement could be signed.

5. Sasson advised the king to act expeditiously in securing the withdrawal of the Iraqi forces from Palestine, and especially from the Triangle and their replacement with Transjordanian forces. If he did so, the Israelis could assure him that they would respect the current lines in the Triangle until the end of the peace negotiations. But if the Iraqi forces remained in their present positions, it was not impossible that the Israelis would clash with them and try to evict them by force. (At this point Tall interjected for the third time to reiterate the king's request to refrain from a clash with the Iraqis and leave it to him to talk to the regent. 'What will be Transjordan's attitude in the event of renewed hostilities between us and the Egyptians in the south?' enquired Sasson. 'Hit the Egyptians as much as you can. Our attitude would be absolutely neutral', was Tall's prompt and devastatingly frank response.)

6. Sasson advised the king to make efforts to obtain the withdrawal of Egyptian forces from the south of Jerusalem and Hebron so as to save himself from the difficulties and political trouble that their presence was liable to cause.

7. Sasson advised the king to avoid, as far as possible, foreign mediation for the settlement of matters between themselves and to opt, as they did, for direct negotiations.

8. If the king acceded to the last seven points, Sasson could promise him the services of the Zionist propaganda machine, locally and internationally, in mobilizing the support of the enlightened world for the implementation of the Jericho resolutions and in weakening the resistance of his opponents.

At the end of the conversation, Tall asked Sasson not to stray too far in his talks with the other Arab states. Sasson himself reported to his superiors that in advising Abdullah to make haste in carrying out the resolutions of the Jericho Congress he intended to encourage the king to face up to any rift or conflict that might develop inside the Arab League and to create the impression that he could rely on Israel's friendship.

Abdullah was indeed heartened by this message and wrote his comments and observations on the message for transmission to Sasson:

1. This is a good suggestion.
2. This is our long-standing plan.
3. Old Jerusalem for the Arabs and new Jerusalem for the Jews. The question be postponed for negotiations.
4. I approve this secretly on condition that it applies to the Iraqi front.
5. For discussion with the regent of Iraq.
6. It is possible after we have settled the problems between us and Egypt and the Arab League.
7. For secret discussion with the pasha (Dr Shawkat as-Sati) and he will inform you of my opinion.
8. Yes.

Sasson was now convinced that negotiations with Transjordan were the most promising avenue for bringing about a termination of hostilities. Inside the army, however, there was reluctance to make concessions to Transjordan and considerable pressure for further military operations to gain more land before the war came to an end. General Yadin and Colonel Dayan felt that Sasson had gone too far during his talks with Abdullah al-Tall in signalling Israel's tacit agreement to the annexation of the Arab parts of Palestine by Transjordan.

Ben-Gurion was not ready to come down decisively on one side or the other. At a meeting of senior officials at the prime minister's office in Tel Aviv on December 18, Sasson spoke in favour of opening peace negotiations with Transjordan. Ben-Gurion stressed that while two further military operations, in the Negev and in the Triangle, were under consideration, the primary aim now was peace and he warned against being flushed with victory. He added:

> Immigration demands that there be an end to war. Our future need is peace and friendship with the Arabs. Therefore I am in favour of talks with Abdullah, although I doubt whether the British will let him make peace with us. But we should make it clear at the beginning of the talks

that apart from the truce there is no agreement between us and the talks would have to be conducted without any prior commitments. To the annexation of parts of Palestine to Transjordan we cannot agree easily for the following reasons: (1) Israel security: an Arab state in Western Palestine would be less dangerous than a state linked to Transjordan, and maybe tomorrow to Iraq. (2) Why should we annoy the Russians unnecessarily. (3) Why should we do it—in contrast to all the Arab states. This does not mean that we would not agree under any circumstances—but only as one element in a comprehensive settlement. There is the Jerusalem question: Latrun, Shaikh Jarrah, and the Old City. We cannot agree to the return of the Arabs to Katamon. On his side he [Abdullah] would raise the questions of Lydda, Ramle, Jaffa. The great problem would be the Triangle. It would be difficult to acquiesce in the narrowness of our strip of territory in Samaria and I do not believe that this can be changed by peaceful means.

Ben Gurion spoke in a similar vein at a Cabinet meeting on December 17 devoted to discussing the campaign in Negev, the possibility of military action in the Triangle, the political status of Jerusalem, and the relations with Abdullah. In his opening statement, he emphasized that, apart from the two operations that lay ahead, they should devote all their efforts to making peace or at least ending the war. For many years to come security would remain the central question and this could not be guaranteed by military power alone. Security entailed mass immigration and settlement on the land in addition to acquiring sophisticated weapons. 'The only solution, perhaps, is Abdullah.' In the debate ministers expressed very diverse views. Some ministers were opposed to military action altogether while others questioned the logic of directing it against the Egyptians rather than Abdullah. Ben-Gurion summed up the discussion with the following policy guidelines: 'For the time being we do not change the status of Jerusalem, we carry out the operation in the Negev, we enter into talks with Abdullah. If the talks reach a turning point, the matter would be brought before the Cabinet, and the Cabinet will decide on changes.'

The decision to renew the offensive against the Egyptians while opening peace talks with Abdullah fitted in with Ben-Gurion's

tactical preference for fighting only one opponent at a time. Yet opening peace talks with Abdullah did not rule out the resort to force. On the contrary, as Sasson reported to Sharett, it seemed that Ben-Gurion had some military plan he wanted to carry out before the start of serious official talks with the king. That is why he refused to agree even for merely tactical reasons to Abdullah's scheme for annexing Arab Palestine. And that is why he instructed Dayan to insist on peace negotiations in his talks with Tall and to settle for nothing less. Dayan told Tall that unless Transjordan was prepared to talk business there was no point in continuing the contacts, and the Israeli government would in fact be compelled to break them off. He said Israel was anxious to negotiate but, if the Arabs refused, would consider herself free to take any action she wished and was in the fortunate position of being willing and able to engage in either war or peace talks. Tall said that he would have to refer back to his superiors; then Dayan telephoned him three times pressing for an answer most insistently.

The ball was now firmly back in Transjordan's court. King Abdullah's game of playing for time, of protecting his position in the Arab world by not embarking formally on peace negotiations with the enemy, had been rudely interrupted by what amounted to an ultimatum from the Israeli side. And the inevitable consequence of meeting Israel's demands was to exacerbate the antagonism between the king and his Arab partners.

Egypt's reaction to the Jericho Congress destroyed any chance there might have been of a common front with Transjordan in the matter of negotiating a settlement. Egypt, followed by Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen, bitterly denounced Transjordan for pursuing an independent policy in Palestine. The Arab League seemed to be falling apart, its individual members placing their individual interests over those of the Arab world as a whole and hastening to save what they could from the debris. Lebanon as well as Egypt and Transjordan offered to conclude a non-aggression pact with the Israelis. Furthermore, each of the three made it perfectly clear that she was willing and anxious to sign such an agreement even though Israel might continue to attack other

Arab forces. Their only interest was to get out of a situation which had taken a disastrous turn for the Arabs and which could only lead to further military defeats and, quite possibly, internal disturbances at home. In Amman the ostrich-like policy of the Arab states caused general resentment and widened the circle of politicians who were ready to countenance an independent line. Abul Huda certainly changed his tune. Previously he had maintained that he could not have anything to do with negotiations as his policy was based on unity with the Arab states. Now he decided to remain in office and even informed the UN representative in Amman that he was willing to negotiate an armistice and suggested that the Israelis should submit a plan in writing for consideration by the Transjordanian government.

While Transjordan was playing for time Israel resumed hostilities against Egypt on December 22. The objective of Operation Horev was to complete the destruction of the Egyptian forces, to drive them out of Palestine, and compel the Egyptian government to negotiate an armistice. Conflicts between the Arab states and poor co-ordination between their armies in Palestine gave Israel the strategic freedom to choose the timing and place of this second offensive. Egypt appealed to her Arab allies for help but her appeals fell on deaf ears. Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and the Yemen all promised assistance but failed to honour their promises. The Iraqis shelled a few Israeli villages near their front line as a token of solidarity with their embattled ally. King Abdullah did not even bother to reply. Without exception the Arab states were either afraid to intervene or did not wish to intervene. The Israeli troops surged forward, expelled the Egyptians from the south-eastern flank of the Negev, brought strong pressure to bear on the Gaza Strip, but failed to liquidate the Egyptian enclave in Faluja. In the course of the fighting, a column commanded by Gen. Yigal Allon penetrated into Sinai, attacked Abu Ageila, and reached the outskirts of El Arish.

At this point Britain intervened by presenting an ultimatum to Israel, under the terms of the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian treaty, to withdraw her troops from Egypt's territory. The ultimatum was communicated by the Americans together with a severe warning

from President Truman. Under this combined Anglo-American pressure, Ben-Gurion caved in and issued the order recalling the Israeli force from El Arish. On 4 January 1949 Egypt announced her readiness to begin armistice negotiations and on January 7 the UN-decreed cease-fire went into force, marking the formal end of the first Arab–Israeli war. A few hours before the cease-fire took effect, an incident occurred which brought Israel to the verge of that nightmare of Israeli strategists—a war with Britain. When RAF planes flew a reconnaissance mission from the Suez Canal zone to check whether the Israeli troops had really pulled back across the international border, five of them were shot down by Israeli planes. The British government demanded an explanation and compensation and sent reinforcements to Aqaba in response to a call for protection from King Abdullah who invoked the Anglo-Transjordanian Treaty. But this time President Truman came out strongly against Attlee and Bevin, as did the British media and Parliament, for taking perilous and needless risks in the Middle East.

Operation Horev ended without fully attaining its aim: the Egyptian army remained in the Gaza Strip and in the enclave at Faluja. Pressure from the United Nations and the Great Powers forced Israel to call off the operation and thereby also reduced her bargaining power in the forthcoming armistice negotiations. But the operation was successful in compelling Egypt, the strongest Arab state with the best claim to lead the others, to open negotiations with the State of Israel and thus to bring the war to an end.

Shiloah, Dayan, and al-Tall

Ben-Gurion, having decided that peace was now the basic objective, remained uncertain as to the best means of attaining it. He believed that of all the Arab rulers Abdullah was the only one who would dare to defy internal opposition and Arab public opinion and come out in favour of peace with Israel; but he was also convinced that even if Abdullah could be squared, Britain would not allow him to conclude a separate peace agreement with Israel. Ben-Gurion was also sceptical about the possibility of

gaining possession of the routes to Jerusalem and broadening Israel's narrow waistline by peaceful means. 'After all', he wrote in his diary, 'the most natural border is the Jordan.' If the West Bank had to stay in Arab hands, Ben-Gurion was not sure whether its annexation to Transjordan would be the best solution because that would bolster Britain's position in the Middle East and antagonize the Soviets, who regarded Transjordan as a client state of the British Empire. For a mere armistice agreement, at any rate, Ben-Gurion was not prepared to give up the option of extending Israel's border to the Jordan by military action; only real peace was worth the sacrifice. Significantly, when Ben-Gurion decided to put Abdullah to the test and compel him to choose either peace or war, it was not the gentle and accommodating Sasson who was sent to deliver the 'ultimatum' but two hardliners—Moshe Dayan and Reuven Shiloah.

Reuven Shiloah was destined to play a vital part in developing the relationship between the Zionist movement and King Abdullah. Born in Jerusalem in 1909, Shiloah studied in Baghdad and later served as a liaison officer between the Jewish Agency and the British administration in Palestine. With the establishment of the State of Israel, Shiloah was appointed as political adviser to the foreign minister. Shiloah disliked the Anglo-Saxon clique at the Foreign Ministry both because he felt that they placed form and ceremony above substance and because they had little knowledge of the Middle East. The Foreign Ministry was rather small and tightly knit in those days whereas Shiloah was a loner and an independent political operator. Much of his work was shrouded in mystery and even to Sharett he did not always report all his clandestine activities. Although Shiloah remained very close to Sharett at the personal level, in his outlook on the Arab world he was closer to Ben-Gurion and the senior members of the defence establishment. With his background in intelligence, Shiloah was one of the few Zionist officials who combined a profound grasp of the country's security problems with a natural talent for diplomacy. And it was this ability to see problems simultaneously from the diplomatic and military angle that carried Shiloah into the inner circle of policymaking and

made him an indispensable co-ordinator between the diplomatic and the security agencies of the new state.

Shiloah was accompanied by Moshe Dayan, a close personal friend, to his first meeting with Abdullah al-Tall and Dr Shawkat as-Sati. The meeting took place in no man's land in Jerusalem on December 25. The king, declared Dr Sati, wanted peace with all his heart and ardently hoped that the cease-fire in Jerusalem would last. Shiloah replied that his government, too, wanted peace, but that it did not believe that a mere truce could lead to peace. Dr Sati said that he was ready to start negotiations for an armistice but that in view of the king's delicate position in the Arab world it would be desirable to keep these negotiations secret. Shiloah rejected the offer, saying that the Israelis were now interested only in negotiating peace and he proposed instead official meetings in a conference room, with maps, to discuss all outstanding questions.

After seeing King Abdullah, Tall called Dayan to say that the king had entrusted him and Dr Sati with preparing a peace plan and representing him at the talks. When their proposal was completed the king would present it to the government; if the government rejected it, he would replace the government. Tall proposed that they should meet alternately in Arab and Jewish buildings rather than standing in no man's land, that they should wear civilian clothes, and bring with them papers and maps.

The second meeting between Shiloah, Dayan, and Colonel Tall went rather well though they did not get down to substantive talks. Shiloah suggested that both sides should bring formal letters of accreditation from their governments and that a summary should be written down at the end of every session. He insisted on confining the talks to the areas held by the Arab Legion and listed the points of interest to the provisional government of Israel. For the second time he tried to find out whether the British were being informed but again met with evasion. Tall indicated that the king was thinking about the division of Jerusalem, the division of the Negev, and several other points. All these subjects were listed as the agenda for the next secret meeting to be held in Jewish Jerusalem on 5 January 1949.

A consultation was held in the prime minister's office in preparation for this meeting. Ben-Gurion succinctly recorded in his diary: 'Sasson proved that the key to peace with the Arab world [is] our agreement to the annexation of the Arab part by Abdullah and the prevention of "Greater Syria". He does not see the difficulties of the agreement with Abdullah (territorial questions) and its dangers (British penetration).' The detailed guidelines given by Ben-Gurion, following a discussion with Sharett, to Shiloah and Dayan for their third meeting with Colonel Tall were intended to keep all Israel's options open. They were to continue the talks, even if they were unproductive, for as long as the fighting with the Egyptians continued in the south. They were not to commit Israel on the annexation of the West Bank by Transjordan, but nor were they to express opposition to it. They were to insist that the eastern border of the Negev should remain as it had been during the mandatory period—up to and including Eilat in the south. And they could mention the possibility of offering Transjordan rights in Gaza with access to it through Israeli territory but not enter into any discussions concerning the Negev.

To the third meeting Shiloah and Dayan brought a letter of accreditation signed by the prime minister and the foreign minister; Tall brought a letter written in King Abdullah's own hand. After the exchange of letters Tall reported that the king did not view these talks as armistice talks following a war; he did not treat what had happened in the last few months as a war but as a *fatna*, an unfortunate quarrel. He recalled the talks that they had held before this unfortunate quarrel and during it, in Paris, and regarded the present talks as a direct continuation of the long-standing contact between them. Shiloah replied that they too recalled this link but that they could not disregard what had happened in the meantime, and whether it was termed war or an unfortunate quarrel, the fact was that they had been attacked, that blood had been spilt, and that a certain military and political reality had emerged.

When Tall outlined Abdullah's specific proposals, it became clear just how wide was the gulf separating the two sides. In the Negev the king wanted a strip of land connecting his country with

Egypt. He assumed that Israel's main interest in the Negev was oil, and he was agreeable that Israel should have the oil region south-west of the Dead Sea. Tall was told that this assumption was utterly mistaken and that Israel's interest in the Negev included access to the Dead Sea, an outlet to the Red Sea, land, and settlement. In response to a question about the reasons for the king's interest in the Negev, Tall mentioned three reasons: access to Egypt, the 100,000 bedouins living there, and strategic needs. He laughed when asked whether he meant Transjordan's strategic interests or those of the king's allies, remarking only that if agreement was reached it would be the Israelis who would become the king's allies.

Abdullah's conception of the division of Jerusalem was that he should have the Old City, Katamon, the German Colony, and all the quarters in the south of the city while the Jews kept the rest. He also wanted to include in the Arab part Talpiot and Kibbutz Ramat Rachel, in exchange for the Arab suburbs of Lifta and Romema that were already in Israeli hands. International rule was to be confined to a road passing between the Arab and Jewish parts and including the King David Hotel and the YMCA. Dayan said that this entire approach was out of touch with reality: since Katamon, Lifta, Romema, and the other suburbs in the south of the city were in Israel's possession, what Tall was proposing was to take areas that were in Israel's possession and offer in return other areas that were also in her possession. He proposed instead that areas in the south of the city might be exchanged for Shaikh Jarrah to link Israel with the Hebrew University. Tall replied that this was out of the question because it would drive a wedge between Arab Jerusalem and Ramallah. Shiloah and Dayan stressed that world opinion would be satisfied with nothing less than international supervision of the Old City and enquired as to the status of the Jewish Quarter under the king's plan. Tall replied that they were prepared to hand it over to Israel and provide access to it. At this point the talks were ended and it was agreed to resume them a week later.

During the interval in these private talks, which were not brought to the attention of the Transjordanian government,

the Egyptian government declared its readiness to open armistice negotiations with Israel under the auspices of the UN acting mediator. Moshe Sharett wanted to prepare a peace plan for the forthcoming talks with Egypt in Rhodes. But Ben-Gurion thought that it would be sufficient to declare their general desire for peace and wait for the other side to state its terms first. He was inclined to agree with Sharett that it would be preferable to let Egypt rather than Abdullah take Gaza, because giving Gaza and a corridor leading to it to Transjordan would not only antagonize the Egyptians but enable Bevin to re-enter Palestine through the back door.

The armistice talks between Israel and Egypt, which opened officially on January 13 in Rhodes, gave King Abdullah the impetus to get down to the real business of peace-making. On that very day, a day before they were due to meet again at the Mandelbaum Gate, Tall called Dayan to say that the king was inviting them to come and talk with him at his palace in Shuneh so that he could personally demonstrate his sincere desire for peace.

The final stage of the Arab–Israeli war was thus marked by renewed co-operation, both tacit and explicit, between Transjordan and Israel. There were a number of ingredients that characterized this renewed co-operation. First, on the Transjordanian side, Abdullah consolidated his rule in the areas of Palestine captured by the Arab Legion. This process reached its climax with the Jericho Congress which opened the road to eventual annexation. Second, in order to secure his rule over the West Bank, Abdullah intensified his contacts with the Israeli side, concluded a cease-fire agreement to cover Jerusalem, and initiated peace talks that would make it more difficult for Israel to initiate hostilities. Third, while Abdullah was consolidating his rule over the West Bank, the Israelis carried out a series of military operations against the army of King Farouk, his chief rival, thereby enhancing Abdullah's position in the Arab world as well as in Palestine. Israel's military operations also forced the mufti's All-Palestine government to flee to Cairo, thereby mobilizing Palestinian support for the merger of the West Bank with Transjordan. Fourth, because the king recognized that

Israel's expulsion of the Egyptian army from the southern part of Palestine would rebound to his advantage, he kept his army out of the 'private war' between them and in this way made an important contribution to the Israeli victory in the Negev. With the defeat of the Egyptians, however, the Israelis could turn their full attention to the eastern front and Abdullah feared that he might be the Israelis' next target. Fortunately for him, the Israeli leadership was inclined to forgo at this stage further strategic conquests on the eastern front, but this self-restraint was contingent on continuing co-operation on the part of the Hashemite king.

13

Negotiating the Armistice Agreement

Rhodes

Armistice negotiations between Israel and the neighbouring Arab states got under way with the help of the UN acting mediator, Dr Ralph Bunche, on the island of Rhodes in January 1949. Israel negotiated bilaterally with each of the neighbouring Arab states, beginning with Egypt, and concluded a separate armistice agreement with each of them. The roll-call was impressive: the agreement between Israel and Egypt was signed on February 24; between Israel and Lebanon on March 23; between Israel and Transjordan on April 3; between Israel and Syria on July 20. Each set of negotiations had a distinctive character, conditioned by the specific military and political circumstances peculiar to that front and, in no small measure, by the personalities of the negotiators. What all the negotiations had in common was that they were held on the basis of the Security Council resolution of 16 November 1948, and under the auspices of the United Nations.

The Arab states were going through a very difficult and frustrating period. They had learnt the hard way that it is easier to get into a war than to get out of it and they were unable to close ranks against the common foe and the bitter consequences of defeat. Defeat on the battlefield led to mutual recriminations and all but shattered co-operation within the Arab League on the Palestine question. Disunity was compounded by rumours of secret exchanges and secret meetings between some Arab governments and Israel and by the general disillusion with the Western Powers and the United Nations. Far from presenting a united front, the Arab governments dealt with Israel independently from positions of terrible weakness, and the selfish manner in which they pursued their national interests was utterly at odds with the commitment they still professed to the cause of Palestine.

Israel emerged from the War of Independence economically exhausted, but with superior organization and morale, a tremendous sense of achievement, and a confident outlook on the future that formed a solid foundation for the development of parliamentary democracy. The first general election for the 120-member Knesset or Parliament was held on January 25. Mapai won some 36 per cent of the votes, the left-wing Mapam 15 per cent, the United Religious Party 12 per cent, the right-wing Herut Party 11.5 per cent, the General Zionists 5 per cent, the Progressive Party 4 per cent, the Communists 3.5 per cent, and the Sephardim 3.5 per cent, the rest of the votes being divided among a number of smaller parties. Following the elections, David Ben-Gurion formed a coalition government consisting of Mapai, the Religious, the Progressive, and the Sephardi parties. The three senior posts remained unchanged, with Ben-Gurion as prime minister and minister of defence, Moshe Sharett as foreign minister and Eliezer Kaplan as finance minister. Mapai thus retained a virtual monopoly in the defence and foreign affairs sphere and it succeeded in excluding the extreme left and extreme right from power.

The election results also had some influence on the country's external orientation. With strong international support from Russia and continuing dependence on arms and immigrants from Eastern Europe, the prospects for extending communist influence in the Jewish state were thought to be considerable. But the swing to the left did not materialize. There was strong American influence pulling the other way and there were also strong trading and economic links with the United Kingdom and Western Europe. Formally, the new government subscribed to a policy of non-alignment, but in practice it looked increasingly to America for economic, military, and political support.

With all its immediate Arab neighbours the new government engaged in formal armistice negotiations in the Hotel des Roses on the island of Rhodes, which had the merit of being neutral and isolated yet within easy reach of all the Middle Eastern capitals. Over the proceedings presided Dr Ralph Bunche, the distinguished member of the United Nations Secretariat who had been

Count Bernadotte's principal assistant. Bunche was a realist who not only preached but also practised the doctrine of 'one thing at a time'. After Egypt had broken the ice, Transjordan and Lebanon informed Bunche that they too were ready to join in the negotiations, but he replied that they would have to wait until the agreement between Israel and Egypt had been concluded.

On February 24 the armistice agreement formally terminating the state of belligerency between Israel and Egypt was signed. Both sides had to move a long way from their opening position to make this agreement possible. Israel had to agree to Egyptian military presence in the Gaza Strip, to the release of the Egyptian brigade from Faluja, and to the demilitarization of El Auja. Despite these concessions, the agreement carried significant gains for the Israeli side. On the military plane it secured Israel's control over the northern Negev and left her freedom of action to capture the southern Negev. On the political plane, it strengthened Israel's international position and helped to establish her credentials for membership of the United Nations. The conclusion of an armistice with the largest of the Arab states paved the way to similar agreements with the other Arab states and gave rise to the hope—soon to be dashed—that armistice would lead to a peace settlement.

Negotiations between Israel and Lebanon began on March 1 and lasted three weeks. In private talks with Sasson the Lebanese had intimated that they could not be the first Arab state to negotiate directly with Israel but they expected to be the second one. The talks were held in Ras al Naqura, alternately in the customs house behind the Lebanese line and the police station on the Israeli side. The footpath linking the two buildings passed through a minefield but offered a magnificent view of the Mediterranean. The atmosphere was much more relaxed and informal than in Rhodes. Privately the Lebanese said to the Israeli delegates that they were not really Arabs and that they had been dragged into the Palestine adventure against their will.

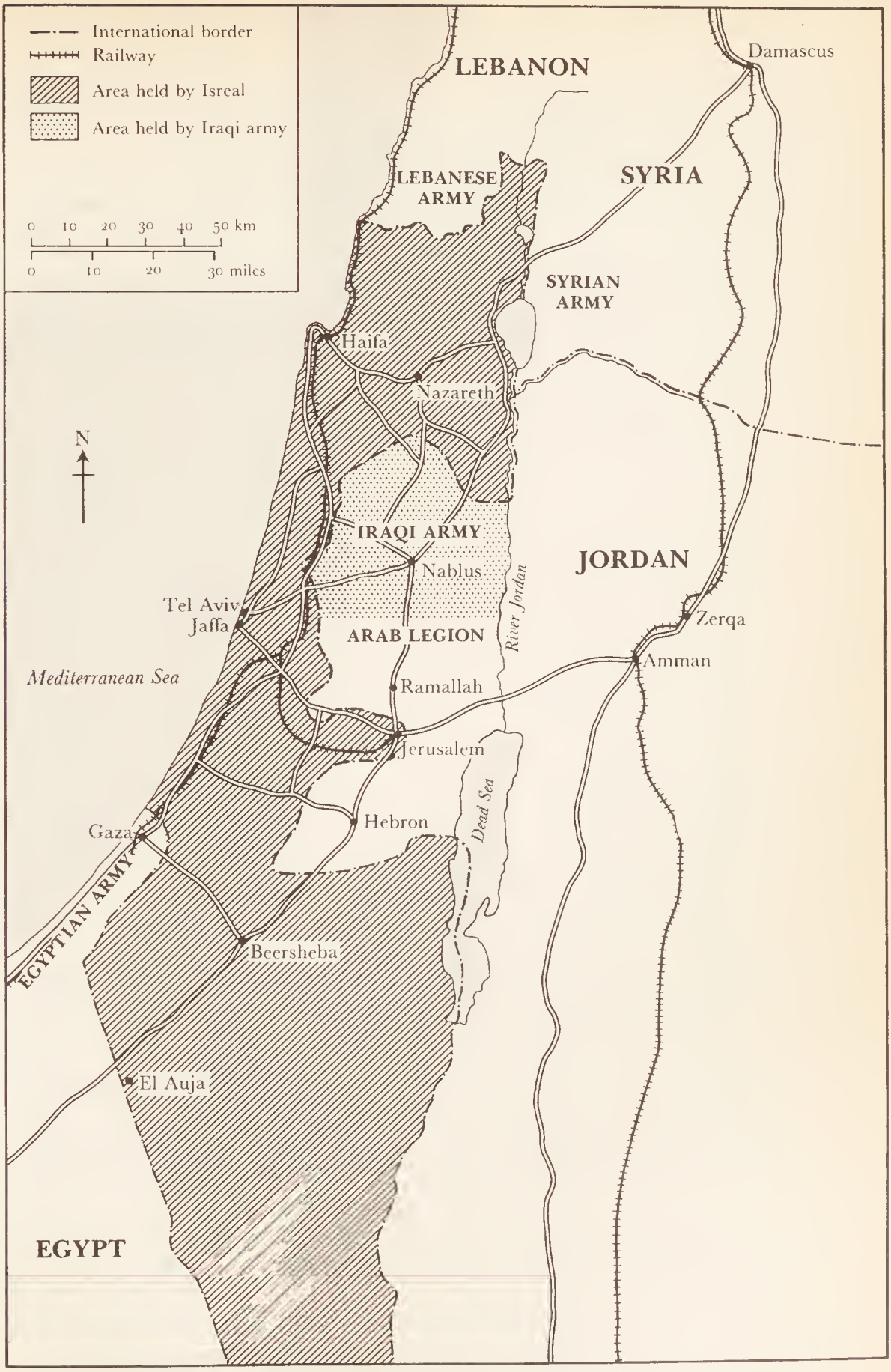
When the talks began, the Israeli army was occupying a narrow strip of Lebanese territory containing fourteen villages. It soon became clear that there was no fundamental problem as both

sides expected that the international border would become the armistice line and that with the signature of the armistice agreement the Israeli army would withdraw from Lebanese territory. The negotiations nevertheless took three weeks to complete because Israel tried to make her withdrawal conditional on Syrian withdrawal from points that the Syrian army still held in Israel, along the Jordan River and on the east bank of the Sea of Galilee. The Lebanese negotiators rejected the Israeli conditions. Bunche applied heavy pressure, threatening to blame Israel for the failure of the talks. In the end a high-level decision was taken to abandon the attempt at linkage between Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon and Syrian withdrawal from Israel. Ben-Gurion felt that an armistice agreement with Lebanon would strengthen Israel's international position, place her in a better position to negotiate with Transjordan, and facilitate a military operation in the Triangle should one become necessary. He also thought that it was in principle undesirable to link one Arab country with another, preferring to deal with each one separately. Accordingly, he ordered that the armistice agreement with Lebanon be signed and the fourteen villages evacuated even though all Israel's conditions and proposals for minor border changes had been rejected.

Prelude to the Israel–Transjordan armistice talks

The armistice negotiations between Israel and Transjordan were dissimilar in almost every respect to the preceding negotiations with Egypt and Lebanon and the negotiations with Syria that were to follow. The character of these negotiations was decisively shaped by the unique features of the Transjordan front, by Iraqi control over part of the front, and by the special political relationship between King Abdullah and the Zionist movement.

The Transjordanian front consisted of long and tortuous lines dissecting Arab and Jewish population centres. The northern part was held by the Iraqi army while some points in the south were held by Egyptian units. In Jerusalem the front line divided the city into two halves separating the two populations (see Map 10).



Map 10 Situation at time of signing Rhodes armistice

Intertwined with the barbed wire was the heart and core of the Arab–Israeli conflict.

The truce lines at the end of the fighting diverged considerably from the UN partition lines, shaping a new military reality in Palestine: the western Galilee, Lydda, Ramle, parts of southern Judea and the northern Negev, including Beersheba, all of which had been assigned to the Arab state, were now under Israeli control. The Gaza Strip was cut off from central Palestine and was held by the Egyptian army. Only in Samaria had the Iraqi army succeeded in capturing a small piece of territory that had been assigned to the Jewish state.

Two major military matters complicated the armistice negotiations between Israel and Transjordan: the Negev and the Iraqi front. The future of the southern Negev was a bone of contention between Israel and Transjordan. Transjordan, with very active British support, sought to incorporate this area in its domain, while Israeli leaders saw it as a vital part of their country and hoped to give effect to their claim by political means.

The question of the Iraqi front was rather more complicated. The truce line in this sector of the front left only a narrow Israeli corridor in the coastal plain, with the Iraqis holding Wadi Ara and the chain of hills overlooking Israeli territory to the east. From a security point of view, this line, which extended across part of the Hadera–Afuleh road, was extremely vulnerable. Consequently, ever since the fighting had come to an end, the Israelis had been looking for ways of changing the line. Various plans for military action had been considered but all were shelved on account of more urgent military operations in the Negev. Yet the defence experts held to their assessment that military action offered the only solution and expressed the fear that negotiations with King Abdullah would jeopardize Israel's military option.

During the preliminary armistice talks with King Abdullah's representatives in late December 1948 no substantive agreement of any kind had been reached because the starting points of the two sides were very different: the king wanted a settlement based on a combination of the UN partition plan with the Bernadotte

plan while Israel maintained that the existing situation be taken as the basic foundation for the settlement.

These preliminary talks were overtaken by the inauguration of the Israeli–Egyptian armistice negotiations in Rhodes. Not wanting to be left out in the cold, Abdullah issued an invitation for further talks to pave the way for official negotiations. Elias Sasson was recalled from Rhodes and on January 16 he and Moshe Dayan, disguised in foreign uniforms, were driven by Col. Abdullah al-Tall to the winter palace at Shuneh. This meeting did not yield any tangible results but it enabled the king to convey to the Zionist leaders his sincere desire for peace talks and it provided them with some useful clues as to his thinking. He declared that he had no use for the Arab League, that he was determined to act alone, and that the fate of Palestine was a matter for discussion only between Israel and Transjordan. The British, he said, knew of his intentions and they not only raised no objections but were pressing him to begin armistice talks in Rhodes. In connection with the Israeli–Egyptian armistice talks Abdullah expressed the hope that the Egyptians would be made to withdraw altogether from Palestine. Sasson replied that he himself had just come from Rhodes, that the talks there were of a military nature, and that it was possible that the Egyptians would stay in Gaza. On hearing this the king grew rather anxious and urged his visitors in the strongest possible terms not to give Gaza to Egypt. He himself needed it as an outlet to the Mediterranean. 'Take it yourselves,' he said excitedly, 'give it to the devil, but do not let Egypt have it!' Before leaving the palace, Dr Shawkat as-Sati, the king's faithful physician, took Sasson on one side and told him to buy al-Tall and then everything would be all right.

The subtle hint was well received by Sasson, who saw in Abdullah al-Tall a potentially valuable figure in furthering the Zionist cause on account of his senior position in the Arab Legion and his closeness to King Abdullah. It was with some difficulty, however, that Sasson persuaded Dayan to hand Tall what amounted to a bribe in return for help in securing the release of the 700 Israeli prisoners, most of them from the Etzion bloc and the Jewish Quarter of the Old City, held by the Arab Legion. An

opportunity arose two weeks later when King Abdullah invited Sasson and 'the one-eye' for another talk and a sumptuous meal. On the way to the palace Sasson concentrated on winning Tall over. He said that if the king should agree to the release of the Israeli prisoners, he hoped that buses could be provided without delay to transport them to Israel and that the Israelis would meet the expenses, whatever they came to. Tall remarked that it would be more convenient if payment could be made in British currency. At this point Sasson signalled to Dayan who handed over the money. After pocketing the money Tall added that there was no need to trouble His Majesty with the operational and logistical details as he himself would make all the necessary arrangements.

King Abdullah and Dr as-Sati received the party graciously in the palace. The king began the meeting by stating that all the Arab governments, Transjordan included, had decided to send representatives for armistice talks in Rhodes but he himself preferred to negotiate separately and favoured prior agreement between Tall and Dayan as well as direct contact during the negotiations. Sasson then raised the question of the Iraqi front and Iraqi representation in Rhodes. The king replied that he was unable to force Iraq to withdraw its army from Palestine, but that he would strive to remove the Iraqis from the border zones and replace them with Transjordanian police and that he himself would assume responsibility for the remaining Iraqi troops. While expressing sympathy for the king's predicament, Sasson made it clear that they would raise the matter in Rhodes and insist on total Iraqi evacuation. The king was determined to start negotiations for a peace treaty immediately after the conclusion of the armistice. This would be done publicly, he said, in Jerusalem, without UN involvement, and with an opening ceremony at his palace in Shuneh.

Towards the end of the conference, the king inquired about the progress of the Israeli–Egyptian armistice talks. He expressed the insistent hope that Israel would not allow the Egyptians to stay in any part of Palestine. When Sasson pointed out that Egyptian police forces might be allowed to stay in Gaza to ensure internal security until the final peace settlement, he retorted that the Egyp-

tians had no business being in Gaza any more than the Syrians in north Galilee. The ejection of the Egyptian troops from Gaza would serve to liquidate Egypt's conquest and the mufti's government. During this part of the talk, the king begged to inform Ben-Gurion that Transjordan saw Gaza as her only outlet to the Mediterranean. To keep this hope alive, Sasson said that Ben-Gurion constantly bore in mind Transjordan's interest in Gaza and that it was very probable that a satisfactory arrangement could be worked out.

During dinner the conversation turned on events in the various capitals of the world. The king was pleased that the Israeli elections had disclosed such slight communist strength, adding that Transjordan had no need for elections as he ruled and Parliament carried out his will. There were endless expressions of goodwill and the king sent his respects to President Chaim Weizmann, David Ben-Gurion, and Moshe Sharett. Against Golda Meir, however, he had nursed ill-feelings ever since their last meeting before the war. According to his version, by presenting him with a choice between submitting to an ultimatum delivered by a woman and going to war, she had forced him to join with the other Arab states in the invasion of Palestine. When he was told that Golda Meir had been posted as Israel's minister in Moscow, he remarked with a twinkle in his eye: *Khallūhā hunāk, khallūhā hūnak!* (leave her there, leave her there!).

Sasson was so well versed in Arab customs that he did not feel out of place in the entourage of the royal court. One of the rules was to meander at leisure over pleasant irrelevancies before getting down to brass tacks. King Abdullah played chess, wrote poetry, and his spoken Arabic was elegant, even ornate. Whenever a visitor came to the court he enjoyed displaying his wisdom and wit by posing riddles to his advisers on Arab literature and history. Another rule of etiquette required them to pretend that they did not know the answers so that the king could answer the questions himself.

Moshe Dayan, whose command of Arabic was inadequate and who was mystified by this elaborate protocol, lost his patience and started nudging his colleague to come to the point. Sasson

ignored Dayan's elbow and after midnight whispered in his ear: 'When I get up to go, follow me.' Dayan was dumbfounded by this failure to even mention the subject they had been instructed to press. Sasson, accompanied by the king, walked towards the door, and when they reached the door the king embraced him. At this point Sasson slid his hand under the king's silk sash. Abdullah gasped because bedouin tradition dictated that if a man placed his hand under the sash of a shaikh, the shaikh had to grant his wish. Sasson's victim raised both his hands in a gesture of surrender and said: 'Ya Elias, please ask what is possible.' Dayan looked on incredulously, wondering whether Sasson had taken leave of his senses. When Sasson pleaded for the release of the 700 prisoners of war, the king turned to al-Tall and asked for his opinion. Al-Tall replied that some of the prisoners were women and children and nothing but a burden for the Arab Legion. He also assured the king that the British would have no objection to the freeing of the prisoners. *Taib!* (good), said Abdullah. 'Let them go and may they be blessed.' On hearing these words, Sasson removed his hand from the king's sash and the two men embraced. Most of the prisoners were released the next day.

Abdullah also contacted the Iraqi regent and arranged to meet him for a discussion on Palestine on February 2 at 'H3', the last pumping station of the Iraqi Petroleum Company on the Iraqi side of the border with Transjordan. Abd al-Illah was accompanied by Prime Minister Nuri al-Said. Abdullah's first request was that the Iraqi forces should hand over their first line of defence to the Arab Legion in order to put an end to the clashes between the Iraqis and the Zionists. He also asked to be given permission to negotiate an armistice with the Zionists on behalf of Iraq. Nuri agreed to start withdrawing the Iraqi troops gradually but he was evasive about empowering Abdullah to represent Iraq in the armistice talks.

Although Abdullah had nothing very new or important to report as a result of the meeting at H3, he sent his doctor to the Israelis with a long message. Dr as-Sati and Colonel Tall met in Jerusalem with Moshe Dayan and Yaacov Shimoni, Sasson's deputy, who had been and remained a fervent supporter of the

pre-war understanding with Transjordan. The message covered familiar ground and was couched in very general terms. Basically it outlined an armistice based on the existing lines but envisaged Israeli concessions on Lydda and Ramle and implied Transjordanian retention of the southern tip of the Negev. The message also said that Abdullah would be responsible for the Iraqi front, without indicating whether he had obtained power of attorney or whether the Iraqi forces were going to withdraw. At the end of the meeting Dayan therefore suggested that if the king wanted to proceed quickly to official talks, he should provide a map showing the exact front-line in the southern Negev and a letter from the Iraqi government authorizing him to negotiate in its name.

Whether deliberate or unintentional, Abdullah's vagueness caused the Israeli leaders not to take him seriously. They suspected that these contacts were merely a public relations exercise as Abdullah was not master of the situation in relation either to Britain or to his own government. For some time Ben-Gurion had been having doubts about the practical utility of these exchanges. Abdullah reminded him, he said, of the loquacious Zionist politician and journalist Nahum Sokolov: 'he speaks pleasantly but without a grasp of the issues and without authority'. On the other hand, Israel was in no hurry to begin armistice talks with Transjordan. Only by military action, it was felt, could she secure an outlet to the Red Sea and foil British designs. The tactic adopted by the Israelis, therefore, was to go slow on the talks with Abdullah and to expedite the negotiations with Egypt. At Rhodes, Gen. Yigael Yadin was already planning what was soon to become known as Operation Uvda (*Fait Accompli*) to extend Israel's control over the Negev down to Eilat.

Operation Fait Accompli

The official armistice talks between Israel and Transjordan opened in Rhodes under the chairmanship of Dr Ralph Bunche on March 4. The head of the Israeli delegation was Reuven Shiloah. The other members of the delegation were Lt.-Col. Moshe

Dayan, Lt.-Col. Dan Laner, and the legal adviser of the Foreign Ministry, Shabtai Rosenne. After a while, Yaacov Shimoni also joined the delegation. Two other Israeli officers, Yehoshafat Harkabi and Shaul Ramati, were attached to the delegation but without becoming official members.

The Israeli delegation went to Rhodes with a set of clear and detailed instructions approved by the Cabinet. Israel's position had already been presented in the preliminary talks but it was now elaborated and defined much more precisely. The principal guidelines were the moving of the front-line in the Iraqi sector in Samaria eastward; adjustment of the front-line south-east of Wadi Ara so that the entire Afuleh–Hadera road would be under Israeli control; evacuation of the Latrun salient; fixing the international border as the armistice line in the Araba; in Jerusalem—free access to Mount Scopus, to the cemetery in Mount Olives, and to the Wailing Wall; use of the railway line to Jerusalem; free access to Naharayim and the reopening of the electricity-generating station; resumption of the water supply to the Dead Sea potash works and free movement in the Dead Sea for its sailing vessels, as well as transport of its produce in Israeli vehicles to Jerusalem. The delegation was instructed not to agree to any reciprocal concessions, whether in territorial exchange or the return of the refugees, without express orders, as well as to ensure the inclusion of a clause in the armistice agreement clarifying that Israel's signature did not constitute recognition of Transjordanian sovereignty over territories west of the Jordan.

The Transjordanian delegation to Rhodes was headed by Col. Ahmed Sidki el-Jundi and included Lt.-Col. Muhammad al-Ma'ayita, Capt. Ali Abu Nuwar, Maj. Radi Hindawi, and the legal adviser, Riad al-Mufleh. These men were all East Bankers with very little understanding of land values, water resources, or conditions in the villages on the West Bank. Tawfiq Abul Huda had resisted the inclusion of Palestinians in the delegation with the argument that the talks were of a military nature and it was not proper to raise political claims until the final settlement had been reached.

In Rhodes it soon became clear that these relatively low-

ranking army officers lacked the authority to decide on major issues and were unequal to the task of conducting complex armistice negotiations. They looked helpless and lost and kept referring every minor question back to their capital. So inferior were these East Bankers to all the other Arab negotiating teams as to give rise to the suspicion that they had deliberately been chosen to ensure that no serious negotiations took place in Rhodes and that everything was referred back to Amman where British representatives could have their say. King Abdullah after all was an autocratic ruler who believed in keeping a close watch on developments and keeping political decisions firmly in his own hands. Now that he was facing one of the most critical decisions of his career, it was all the more important that he personally should remain in charge. It was not long before Abdullah indicated that he could not rely on his delegation to negotiate on his behalf and that he wanted to conduct the negotiations himself, privately and secretly at his winter palace at Shuneh. The tragicomic talks in Rhodes were to provide an official façade while the real bargaining was being carried on elsewhere. Only the king's closest confidants were to know; the rest of the world was to go on watching the puppet show in Rhodes.

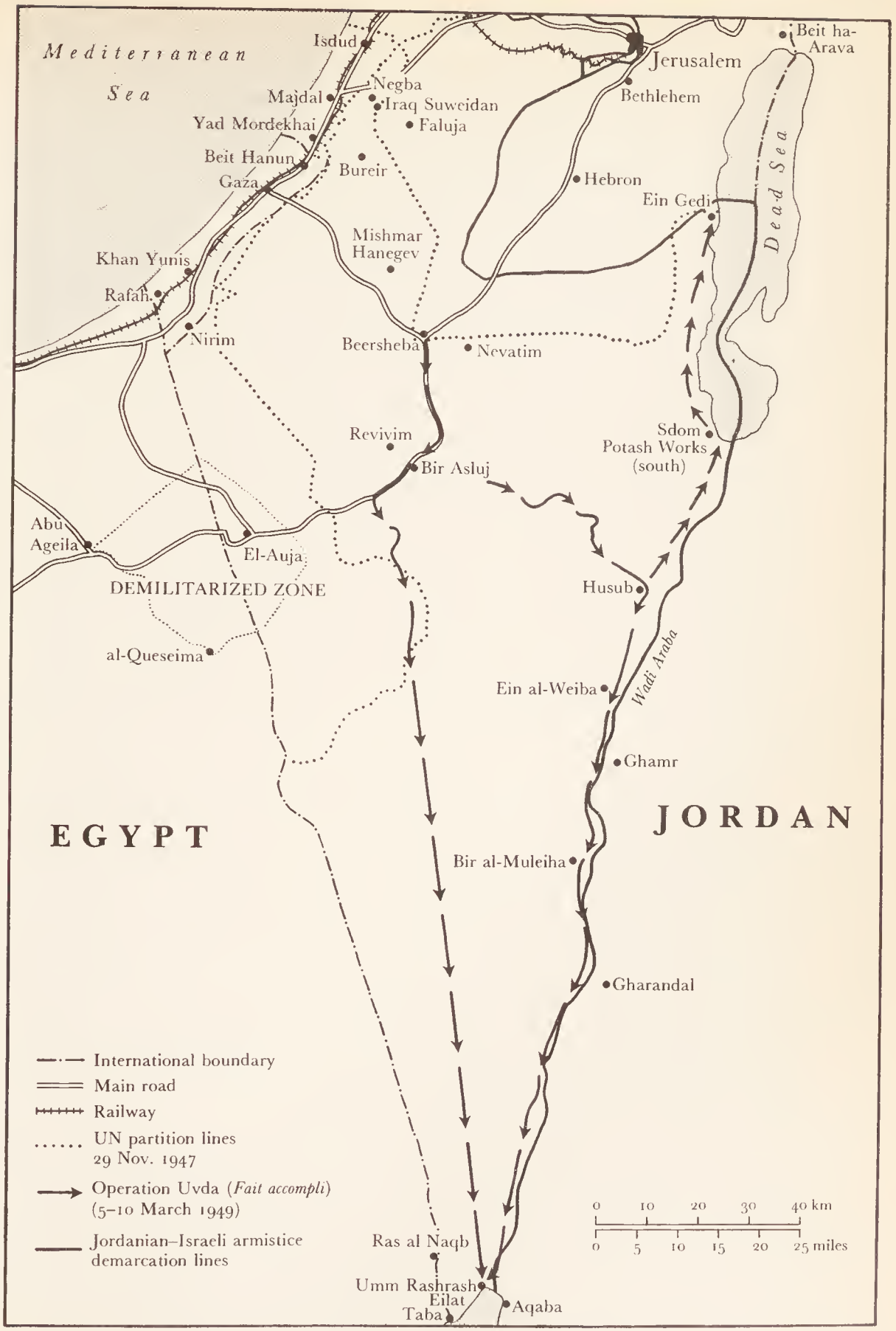
The show lasted a month and was divided into four phases: 4–11 March, 12–17 March, 18–23 March, and 24 March–3 April.

The opening session in Rhodes raised a storm in a teacup. It had been agreed with Bunche beforehand that he would formally present the leaders to one another, but when he came into the conference room Colonel Jundi was already seated and he declined to stand up and shake hands with Shiloah. It soon transpired that there had been no malevolent intent but a simple misunderstanding. Yet Sharett pompously cabled Shiloah: 'Notify Bunche that if the Jordanians continue to behave in this boorish manner, we shall stop the negotiations and announce that they will be renewed only after we are satisfied that they have learned the elementary lessons in civilized deportment.'

The first phase of the deliberations on the armistice lines was immediately plunged into a crisis by the unfolding of Operation *Fait Accompli*. This operation, designed to capture the southern

Negev, was conducted, in accordance with Ben-Gurion's precept of one war at a time, between 5 and 10 March. Ben-Gurion was afraid of upsetting the armistice agreement with Egypt, afraid of wrecking the armistice talks with Transjordan, afraid of provoking all-out war with the Arab Legion, and, above all, afraid of a direct clash with the British forces stationed in Aqaba. Strict central control and severe political constraints were accordingly maintained throughout the operation. The plan was that two brigades would depart from Beersheba towards Eilat in a pincer movement, one going through the middle of the Negev mountains and the other through Wadi Araba along the border with Transjordan. The order to the brigade commanders was not to engage in any fighting and in the event of encountering enemy forces, to break off contact. Yigal Allon's creative interpretation of this order from HQ, for the benefit of his two brigade commanders, was that they should defend themselves all the way to Eilat! The first brigade did not encounter any enemy forces but the second brigade came across Arab Legion units who tried to block its advance. The most serious clash occurred in Gharandal. The Arab Legion also took up positions in Ras al-Naqb, near the Egyptian–Israeli border and near Umm Rashrash (Eilat). But on orders from Glubb Pasha these positions were evacuated during the night between 9 and 10 March, and on that day the Israeli brigades reached Eilat. (See Map 11.)

Amman made frantic attempts to halt the Israeli advance by diplomatic means, through an official complaint submitted to Bunche, a personal message addressed by Abdullah to Sharett, and through the British government. The latter communicated the Transjordanian protests to the Israeli government and even threatened to open fire on the IDF if they attacked the British forces stationed in Aqaba or crossed the border in that area. Abdullah's message of March 8 warned that the IDF forces were liable to clash with his units at any moment and begged Israel to refrain from further advance towards Aqaba pending a settlement in Rhodes. It also pointed to the contradiction between Sasson's nice letter from Paris and Israel's military actions and asked for an explanation. Sharett replied that he did not under-



Map 11 Operation Uvda (*Fait Accompli*) and the Jordanian–Israeli armistice line (south)

stand His Majesty's concern and assured him that Israel's forces had not crossed and had no intention of crossing the border. If the king ordered the Arab Legion to refrain from crossing the border into Israel, no clash would occur. Sharett ended with the hope that the armistice negotiations would be successfully concluded, based on the territorial integrity of both parties.

Sasson was not surprised to learn that the king felt that the behaviour of the IDF contradicted his promises. The king, Sasson explained to Sharett, was under the impression that when the time came it would not be difficult for the two 'friends' to find a common language; he did not realize that the negotiations with Transjordan would be more difficult and complex than with any of the other Arab countries. Sasson's advice was to treat the king fairly, to be patient with him, and to explain things to him in the language of friends seeking the common good and not in the language of politicians insisting only on their own interests. This was what they themselves had led Abdullah to expect in the past and Sasson had no doubt that continuing to behave in this gentlemanly fashion was a sure way of attaining their objectives.

Although Abdullah was clearly disturbed by the new pattern of Israeli behaviour, he did not break off the talks. The Israelis' tactic of delaying signature of the cease-fire agreement until they had completed their advance to the Gulf of Aqaba had worked. Operation *Fait Accompli* had indeed created new facts which neither the UN nor Transjordan nor Britain had the power to change. On March 11, a general cease-fire agreement between Israel and Transjordan was signed in Rhodes. UN observers were sent to the Araba region and shortly thereafter certified the location of the Israeli positions in the southern Negev.

Nor was this the only example of the coercive diplomacy practised by Israel during the armistice talks. The ripples created by the Aqaba affair had not died down before the Israeli leaders once again spoke to Abdullah in the language of politicians with a victorious army behind them. The second phase of the armistice talks was confined essentially to the Transjordanian front since the position of the Iraqi front remained unclear. The Iraqis

refused to send representatives to Rhodes or to let the Transjordanians negotiate on their behalf. It was a question of principle for them, as well as one of national honour and prestige, not to enter into any negotiations with the Zionists and not to recognize the Zionist state. The Iraqis did agree, on March 10, that the Arab Legion should take over their forward positions and that the hand-over should be completed within 15 days, freeing the Iraqi army to return home with its honour and commitment to the Palestine cause intact. But the Transjordanian government seemed hesitant about taking over the Iraqi front stage by stage and Glubb Pasha seemed to be dragging his feet. Glubb had never favoured replacing the Iraqi army in the Triangle for fear that his own army would become too thinly stretched. He would have preferred the Iraqis to sign an armistice agreement like all the other Arab countries and to stay put and he regretted that Abdullah had asked the Iraqis to retire quietly from the field in favour of the Arab Legion. These prevarications gave rise to the suspicion, forcefully expressed to General Juburi by Fadal al-Jamali, the new prime minister, that there was a Transjordanian–Zionist plot afoot to force Iraq into negotiations with the Zionists.

In Amman there were also fears that the radical pro-Palestinian elements in the Iraqi army might get out of hand and turn against the Transjordanian regime for its failure to stand fast against the enemy. Having to conduct military operations under severe political constraints had a frustrating and a radicalizing effect on the Iraqi army. Regardless of rank, many Iraqi officers were of the opinion that they were capable of accomplishing the mission for which they had been sent to Palestine but that they were being made to fight with one hand tied behind their backs as a result of political interference from above. Some of the younger Iraqi officers, their political consciousness heightened by the experience at the front, indeed began to talk among themselves about the need to get rid of the British and to replace the regimes subservient to the British in Baghdad and Amman.

In the more serene setting of the Hotel des Roses, the negotiations dealt with the Israeli demands for including the Latrun

salient on their side of the line, for free access to Mount Scopus, for reactivating the railway to Jerusalem, and with the Transjordanian demand for free access to Bethlehem. But in the protracted deliberations on these subjects, Bunche was unable to induce the two delegations to soften their stand. He tried to break the deadlock with a compromise proposal of his own which called for the demilitarization of Jerusalem, and joint supervision, with UN participation, of the contested roads and railway. Both sides rejected this proposal. The Israeli delegates regarded it as a ploy to take advantage of the dispute between the parties in order to put into effect the UN resolutions on Jerusalem. They concluded that it would be preferable to deal with Jerusalem and its environs in direct talks outside Rhodes and to sign an armistice agreement based on the lines of the 'sincere truce' that Dayan had previously concluded with al-Tall. The Transjordanians concurred and this item was consequently removed from the agenda. The discussions now turned to the reduction and deployment of forces and other military matters.

Upon completion of Operation *Fait Accompli*, the Israelis received intelligence that the Iraqi army had agreed to hand over its forward positions to the Arab Legion. King Abdullah had assumed all along that Israel would welcome the transfer. It was Elias Sasson who had first urged him to take over the Iraqi positions. But now Israel seized on the proposed transfer as a convenient excuse to press for the modifications she had long desired in the Wadi Ara area. In the General Staff, plans for capturing the Triangle, or the whole of the West Bank, including the Old City of Jerusalem, were under constant discussion. The generals were convinced that the strategic value of controlling central Palestine up to the Jordan far outweighed any temporary inconvenience and diplomatic embarrassment that another military operation would entail. Three brigades were moved to the central front and preparations for military action began in earnest.

At this point, however, Israel's political leaders paused to consider the possible consequences and international repercussions. They feared that an operation, such as the one insistently

advocated by General Allon for taking over the whole West Bank in three days, might sway world public opinion against Israel and against Israeli membership of the United Nations, as well as aggravating the already enormous Arab refugee problem. They were much less ready, therefore, to tempt fate in the Triangle than they had been in the Negev. Ben-Gurion felt that with Israel still in the dock over its advance to Aqaba, it would be a mistake to launch another major military operation. He was especially reluctant to push Britain too far and to risk her re-entry into Palestine and a possible clash with the IDF. Bevin, he assumed, was looking for an opportunity to take revenge on Israel for the humiliating defeats inflicted on him in El Arish and in Eilat, and a premature move could provide him with just the opportunity he was looking for. The question was how to obtain the vital piece of territory without fighting for it.

In the end it was decided to use the preparations for what was code-named Operation Shin-Tav-Shin as an instrument of coercive diplomacy. The three brigades were ostentatiously shuffled around in broad daylight as part of the new war of nerves being waged against Transjordan. The Israeli government protested to Bunche that the contemplated redeployment of forces on the Iraqi front would be a violation of the existing truce and that it reserved all its rights. Israel was now in fact claiming that she had no less of a right to occupy the positions to be vacated by the Iraqi army than the Arab Legion. And the well-publicized manœuvres near the Iraqi front were designed to leave no doubt in Abdullah's mind that if Israel failed to secure these positions by diplomacy, she would take them by force.

With constant reports of fresh Israeli advances, the stonewalling in Rhodes, the Iraqis beginning to pull back, and the 10,000-strong Arab Legion facing an army ten times bigger, Abdullah's anxiety grew too deep to contain. On March 14, he sent an urgent message to Foreign Minister Sharett: 'It is reported that you have declared that an Israeli army unit has reached the shore of the Gulf of Aqaba in territory considered to be included in Palestine. That, I know, is correct. It is further reported that in your declaration you went on to say that any part of Palestine

which is evacuated by the Iraqi army will be captured by Israeli forces to ensure defence stability. Is this true?'

On the next day, Walter Eytan sent a reply in the name of the Israeli government:

Foreign Minister Sharett is abroad and I am acting in his place. I have the honor to thank you in his name for your kind letter, which was received yesterday. As to the evacuation of Iraqi forces from the areas they now hold and their replacement by Arab Legion forces, we have already notified the UN acting Mediator that we regard this step as a flagrant violation of the truce and we shall not recognize it so long as our agreement has not been secured. However, we have no intention of capturing this territory nor threatening its Arab inhabitants, since it is our wish to reach a peace agreement in this area too. It is our view that a discussion of this matter falls outside the purview of the armistice talks at Rhodes, but we are prepared to recall Colonel Moshe Dayan from Rhodes for a talk with the King's representative in Jerusalem on the arrangements acceptable to both parties for the territory to be evacuated by the Iraqi forces. We shall be grateful to Your Majesty if you would let us know if it is your wish that we invite Colonel Dayan for such a talk in Jerusalem. We are convinced that this will be agreeable to you, for you, no less than we, would prefer a solution by peaceful means.

Abdullah agreed and Dayan said goodbye to the Hotel des Roses and to the butterflies in the woods to return to dark-of-night talks in the no man's land of Mandelbaum, the gentleman whose name and war-ravaged house between the Transjordan and Israeli lines had entered history as a unique gate of Jerusalem. When Dayan met Abdullah al-Tall on March 18, he felt no need for lengthy preliminaries or for gentle treading around the subject. He told Tall directly that Israel wanted the Wadi Ara defile and the heights overlooking the narrow coastal plain. Tall replied that in his view such a concession was not possible both because of the stand of the Iraqi army and because of public opinion at home. In that case, said Dayan, there were two alternatives: either the Transjordanians would not replace the Iraqis at all, or they would reach an agreement with Israel which would be implemented gradually to avoid publicity. Tall favoured a secret agreement but reserved the final decision for the king.

On the following day the king sent the following message to Walter Eytan: 'I know you will agree with me on the question of our taking over the Iraqi sector of the front, since this arises out of the talks I had with Mr Sasson and Col. Dayan. I myself talked to the Iraqis when I met them at the border and persuaded them that I would take over the entire front. If you and Dayan could meet me, I hope the results would be what we all desire.'

Dayan asked the General Staff for an interpreter who spoke good literary Arabic and for a map and promised that in talking to the king they would not 'ask for a mountain in order to settle for a mouse' in the manner of Oriental hagglers but would tell him what they want and stand by it. Maj. Yehoshafat Harkabi ('Fati'), a staff officer who was to become the Director of Military Intelligence and later a leading expert on the Arab–Israeli conflict, accompanied Dayan to the meeting at Shuneh as the interpreter. 'The meeting did not last long', wrote Dayan in his memoirs. 'We greeted, dined, explained and departed at 10 p.m., leaving the King to digest our proposals—which were just, though by no means modest—and to consult with his ministers.'

For Harkabi, whose Arabic was fully equal to the occasion, this was the first meeting with an Arab potentate and it made a strong impression on him. What surprised him most was the ease with which Abdullah seemed prepared to grant Israel's demands. The huge stumbling-block he had expected turned out to be scarcely a pebble. From the mature vantage point of some thirty-five years after the event, Harkabi conceded that the Israeli approach was crude and little more than a series of improvisations directed at seizing every possible extra bit of land. In fairness, he added, it may have been felt that favourable conditions would enhance the prospects of peace. The aim was to secure as favourable an armistice agreement as possible because it was believed that the terms of the final peace settlement would closely correspond to those of the temporary armistice agreement. This was in line with the basic Zionist conception that peace is not an end in itself but a means towards the realization of the supreme goal of building a large, viable, and independent Jewish state. Hence the dynamic

approach to negotiations, hence the preoccupation, verging on obsession, to do everything possible to gain more land and to improve Israel's strategic conditions.

Harkabi had nothing but praise for the way in which the 34-year-old Dayan presented Israel's demands for Wadi Ara and the ridge south-east of it. 'With the Iraqis', said Dayan, 'we are there as enemies. With you we shall be there as friends.' Not understanding precisely what was involved, Abdullah turned to Colonel Tall to ask for his opinion. *M̄a'qūl?* he asked—Is it reasonable? *M̄a'qūl*, replied Tall. And thus was reached the basic understanding that was eventually translated into detailed provisions in the armistice agreement. In his memoirs Abdullah al-Tall presents himself as the fervent supporter of Palestinian nationalism, as the only man who tried, and failed, to rescue the king from the clutches of the wily and rapacious Jews. But Harkabi testifies that at the meeting itself Tall was helpful and instrumental in promoting the accord.

No doubt the British communication telling Abdullah that Great Britain did not regard her treaty obligations as extending to anything that might happen outside the borders of Transjordan itself also helped to place the king in a receptive frame of mind, as did the growing impatience of the Iraqis. In any case, the main point that emerged from the meeting was that he was willing, in return for Israel's consent to the Arab Legion replacing the Iraqis, to give her Wadi Ara, the ridge to the south-east of it, and the first line of hills on the north-west side of the Wadi. By agreeing specifically that Tulkarem and Kalkilya with their large civilian population would not be involved and would remain purely Arab areas, Dayan made it easier for the king to yield on the territory that was strategically vital for Israel. The king wanted the agreement to be kept secret and to include a clause for face-saving purposes in case the agreement ever leaked out, to the effect that Israel had handed over to Transjordan comparable areas elsewhere. He also preferred the agreement to be implemented in stages over a period of four to six months. Dayan indicated that in general the ideas propounded by the king seemed sound, and it was arranged that the following day Tall would

obtain the consent of Glubb and also fly to Beirut to inform the prime minister and the foreign minister of the king's tentative decision. Tall was to give Dayan the final word of approval by 6 p.m. on March 21, after consulting all these parties.

Various meetings were hastily arranged with ministers, officials, and military commanders in Amman to discuss the latest developments. Although the strip to be surrendered included some of the richest land still in the possession of the Arabs, it was assumed that the object of the Israeli demand was strategic rather than economic. The sparing of Tulkarem and Kalkilya was greeted with a sigh of relief. Glubb calculated that the total area demanded by Israel was some 400 square kilometres, whereas the whole area defended by the Arab Legion and the Iraqi army amounted to some 6,000 square kilometres. The area to be ceded, therefore, represented just over 6 per cent of the whole. In response to the letter from the prime minister, Glubb replied that if the Israeli demands were rejected and hostilities were renewed, the Arab Legion would not be able to hold the line after the Iraqis had gone. Moreover, if war recommenced, the Israelis might well seize more territory than they had asked for. At the most, 2,000 Transjordanian troops could be mustered to replace the 10,000 Iraqi soldiers, and as the latter proposed to withdraw forthwith regardless of what everybody else did, the Transjordanian government had no choice but to accept the Israeli terms. There was some loose talk from junior officers about fighting on, but the leaders knew that the game was lost and the forfeits had to be paid.

It was finally suggested by the prime minister and agreed by the king that a special ministerial committee should be appointed to conduct direct and secret negotiations with Israel while the shadow boxing continued in Rhodes. Falah al-Madadha, who was minister of justice and acting defence minister, was appointed as head of the delegation. Abdullah's advice was to accept the Jewish demands and reach agreement with them whatever the cost so that they might settle the Palestine problem once and for all. 'We have many strategic positions in the mountains in Tubas and Jericho', he added. 'What can we lose if

we give them some hills to protect their lands?' When Tall intervened to suggest that something should be asked in return for those hills, the king's anger was only deflected by Education Minister Muhammad Amin Shanqiti who said: 'The Arabs in Palestine have fled their villages, left their homes to the Jews and His Majesty—may God prolong his life—is now their only protector, so there is no room for arrogant self-exaltation. It is best to negotiate with the Jews, whatever the cost.'

During lunch His Majesty was in a maudlin and self-pitying mood. 'I am ready to give up my throne before renewing battle with the Jews,' he mused. 'But the question is, who would assume power after I had gone? In the name of God, I love Transjordan and its people, not out of personal interest, as the country is poor. If I left the country, I wouldn't have enough money to pay for even a single dinner.' After lunch he ordered Tall to invite the *jamaʿah* (by which word he meant the Jews)—to dinner!

Carrying out the royal order, Tall informed Dayan that everyone on his side was willing to sign an agreement on the basis that had been outlined two evenings earlier at Shuneh and asked that an Israeli delegation appear in the no man's land near the Mandelbaum Gate at 7 p.m. on the evening of March 22.

Three nights at Shuneh

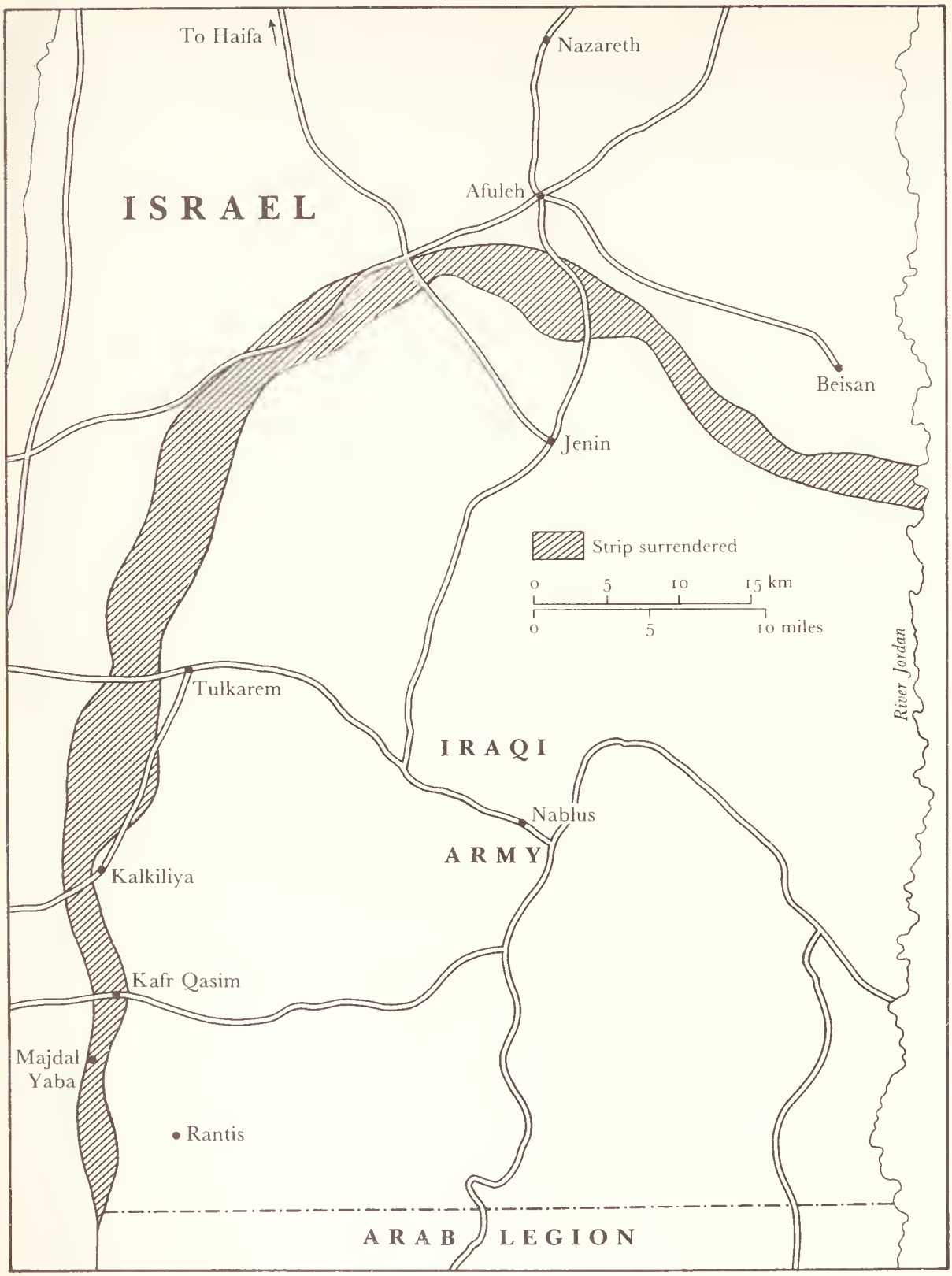
The Israeli delegation consisted of Walter Eytan, Yigael Yadin, Moshe Dayan, and Yehoshafat Harkabi. Before the meeting Yadin prepared a map with three lines representing Israel's maximum, minimum, and intermediate demands and obtained Ben-Gurion's approval and instructions. The arrangement was that the party should set out from Jerusalem after dark and return before dawn so as to minimize the chances of anyone seeing them cross the lines—a jumbled mass of debris and half-destroyed houses, with minefields on either side. The party had to pick its way through several hundred yards of this dangerous shambles in pitch darkness, stumbling over planks, twisted iron, and cement blocks until it came to a clearing on the other side. There Colonel Tall stood waiting with a car in which he conveyed the party

across the Allenby Bridge and other heavily guarded checkpoints to Shuneh. For Eytan this was a journey into unknown country, and enemy country at that, but he was the king's guest and had no qualms. Soon after crossing the river, they reached Shuneh, where the winter palace struck him as not so palatial after all. It was a reasonably comfortable country house with a very large oil painting, curiously enough, of the Battle of Trafalgar, a gift to King Abdullah from King George V.

Abdullah received the party with exquisite courtesy. In attendance were Falah al-Madadha, Hussein Siraj, the under-secretary of state for foreign affairs, and Abdullah Tall. Some of the *dramatis personae* were away in Beirut at a meeting with the UN's Palestine Conciliation Commission. The king opened the proceedings with a long speech, studded with many Arabic sayings, such as, 'your neighbour who is near is dearer to you than your brother who is far away', and similar words of proverbial wisdom. After Eytan had made a suitably courteous reply, the king retired and the two delegations got down to business.

They talked for six hours, although the atmosphere was not friendly as the Israelis took a very strong line. With the help of a map Yadin presented Israel's demands for territorial adjustments in the 60-kilometre-long front line held by the Iraqis (see Map 12). A cursory look at the new line drawn by Yadin revealed the unexpected depth of the area demanded by Israel. Within the area in question there were several Arab villages, and the Trans-jordanian delegates were concerned about their future. A long discussion ensued about the size of the area, the fate of its inhabitants, and the possibility of reciprocal Israeli concessions. By 1 a.m., however, the two sides had agreed on a line and on a draft text for the agreement.

The king's final approval was required for this map and the draft, as according to Tall His Majesty did not realize that he would have to give up so much territory and might be appalled when he saw this. Tall was to telephone by 2 p.m. the next day to inform the delegation of the king's acceptance or rejection of the scheme, but they made it clear that they would negotiate no further and it was now a question of take it or leave it. Tall duly



Map 12 Strip of territory surrendered to Israel, to secure Israeli agreement to an armistice on the Iraqi front

telephoned at the appointed hour to report that the king agreed and invited the delegation that evening to Shuneh to feast and sign the agreement.

What Yadin had presented was an ultimatum: nothing more and nothing less. He left no room for doubt that unless the agreement was signed within twenty-four hours, Israel would take that whole area, and possibly more, by force. Abdullah had to pay a price, a very heavy price, but he felt that he had no alternative. To the American chargé in Amman, Wells Stabler, Abdullah confessed that he felt that if he refused to sign the agreement, Israel would recommence hostilities and the whole area might be lost. It would in fact be better to sacrifice another fifteen villages with an additional estimated 15,000 refugees than to lose what little was left of Arab Palestine. On the other hand, if he did sign the agreement and then an armistice, it might be difficult for the Israelis to make further excessive demands. Stabler, whose sympathies were entirely on the king's side, only wished it were possible to believe that the Israelis would present no further demands. In a cable to Secretary of State George Marshall, Stabler described the Israeli demands and the 24-hour ultimatum as being in the nature of blackmail, adding for good measure that it appeared to be rank injustice for the United States government to stand by while Israel was forcing Transjordan into such an agreement at gun-point.

On the evening of March 23, the same Israeli delegation proceeded by the same route to Shuneh to meet a much larger team than on the previous night. The team that the king had now assembled included a large ministerial component, several members of the royal court, and a British officer, Lt.-Col. Charles Coaker, who served as Glubb's chief of staff and head of the Survey Department. The king had invited Glubb himself to attend but the latter had apparently excused himself, saying he did not want to see the Jews' faces. It suited the Israelis not to see Glubb's face either because they did not want it said in the Arab world that this agreement was the product of British–Zionist collusion.

Walter Eytan felt that he could write a small book about this

experience, about the queerness of passing through Jericho and over the Allenby Bridge, about sitting down at the king's table with a British officer, and similarly unusual impressions. In his report to Sharett, Eytan gave a vivid account of the general atmosphere, of the principal personalities, and of the strange proceedings of that very memorable evening:

The king, who appeared to be in excellent health apart from an affliction of the bladder which makes him take 'Urodonal' and run out to the lavatory every quarter hour or so, is surrounded by the most extraordinary types. His Acting Prime Minister, whose name is something like Said Pasha Mufti, is to all appearances mentally deficient, though this does not prevent him from being at the same time Minister of the Interior and Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs. Our friend of the previous night, Falah Pasha el Madadha, who is Minister of Justice and Acting Minister of Defence, had little notion of what the whole thing was about, and signed the agreement, which was in English, without understanding a single word of what the document contained, though I presume it had been conveyed to him that it was good thing for the King. Abdullah Tall, who is an outstanding figure in that crowd, maintained an attitude of utter cynicism throughout the proceedings, though he helped actively to get the agreement concluded. He seems to be wholly disillusioned—about the Arabs, about the British, and about everything else—and speaks about the King, even in the King's presence, in a way which can only be described as contemptuous. As, however, he appears at the same time to feel some affection for the King and to be sincerely anxious to safeguard his interests, I can only assume that there are things in the Arab character which I simply do not understand.

We reached Shuneh at about 8.00 p.m., bringing the King a present consisting of two silver candlesticks and a badly printed *Tanach* [Bible] encased in a heavy silver binding. In return I received a murderous looking dagger. We stood around in the drawing room smoking, while someone kept a lookout for the King's approach—the signal for putting out cigarettes quickly. The sight of His Excellency, the Minister of Justice and Acting Minister of Defence trying like a schoolboy to conceal a cigarette which he did not have time to put out was one I shall not quickly forget. After we had been introduced and said a few polite things, the King led us in to dinner, at which I sat on his right and Yadin on his left. The dinner was excellent, as we had all expected. Conversation was a little difficult, but whenever it failed the King put things right by

extending his hands and grasping Yadin and me by the arm, apparently as a silent gesture of friendship. After dinner we all went back into the reception room, the King sat down at one end with the Acting Prime Minister sitting opposite and the rest of us grouped in between. The King then started a long speech about friendship between our two countries, the past (including Deir Yassin), the future (naturally not so specific), his relations with Britain and the United States, as well as many other things, including what he thought of the Mufti and solicitous inquiries after the health of Mr. Ben-Gurion, Mr. Sharett, Mrs. Myerson ('Saida Golda'), Mr. Sasson and Mr. Rutenberg. In the end, after the King had gone (saying he usually went to bed at nine o'clock—it was by this time nearly eleven), we got down to business. The agreement was finally signed at 2.00 a.m., as were the maps which go with it, and we left Shuneh at 2.30 a.m., reaching Tel Aviv just over three hours later.

A copy of the agreement itself is attached to this letter. I have already told you by cable of how the new line runs and the only additional thing worth saying about it is that Glubb's Chief of Staff helped to draw it and finally signed the maps together with the members of the Transjordan Delegation. At first, when Abdullah Tall told us on the way to Shuneh that a British officer would be present, we raised objections, but Abdullah Tall said that the members of the delegation and the various Ministers at Shuneh had no more idea of map-reading than the King had, and that it was essential for a military man to be present and see to this side of things. As all the good Transjordanian officers were away at Rhodes, they had asked Lt.-Col. Coaker to help them. In the end both Yadin and Dayan thought it was a good thing that this officer was present and certified the line, as this would make it impossible for the Transjordanians afterwards to say that we had tricked them. Col. Coaker's presence means, of course, that the British know about the arrangement and presumably give it their blessing . . .

In a sense, this agreement is too good to be true, and I shall not believe in its reality completely until I see what happens when the time comes for it to be implemented. It gives us in respect of territory—nearly all of it highly strategic—far more than we should ever have contemplated taking by military action.

In conclusion I should like to emphasise once again the need for secrecy. We have guaranteed, under Article 11, not to publish the agreement, and it is obviously in our interest to get its provisions implemented before they become generally known in the Arab world, where they

would be sure to produce an outcry, perhaps on a scale that might make their execution impossible.

Yadin's most vivid memory was of King Abdullah's extraordinarily long opening speech, giving his version of the events that had led to that bizarre gathering. Though addressed to the Israeli delegation, much of this speech was really directed at the king's own advisers and took the form of a reprimand for their having failed to heed his warning that the Arabs, a weak and backward people, had no chance of defeating the Jews who were a united and advanced people. In a nutshell, Abdullah claimed that he had always wanted peace and that it was the other Arab rulers and his own advisers who had pushed Transjordan into war. The British, he stated, had misled him from start to finish and had even supplied him with shells stuffed with sawdust instead of gunpowder. Turning pointedly to his advisers, he said:

> I now want to tell you a story in the presence of our guests. As you know and they know, I am a bedouin and there is an ancient bedouin saying that I first heard from my father and it goes as follows: if you are fleeing from your enemy, with your tent and all your possessions loaded on your horse, and you see that the enemy is getting closer, you have two alternatives: either to fall into your enemy's hands with all your goods or to throw to him parcels as you continue to flee. And I want you to know that I have invited our Israeli friends in order to throw parcels to them!

At a certain moment in this long and rambling speech, when the king explained how heavy were the sacrifices he was being called upon to make, Dayan could not restrain himself and told him that the three military members of their delegation—Yadin, Harkabi, and himself—had each lost a younger brother in this war—a war which they had not wanted and which would not have broken out if the Arab states, Transjordan included, had not attacked them. The time to have talked about concessions and compromise was before the war, in order to prevent it. Now one had to bear the consequences and pay the price.

Nevertheless, the Israelis did make some minor concessions which made it easier for the Transjordanians to sign the agreement. Yadin's original line was slightly redrawn and an article

was inserted into the agreement, to save Transjordan's face in the Arab world, stating that Israel, for its part, made similar changes for the benefit of 'the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan'. Another article safeguarded the rights of the inhabitants of the villages to be surrendered to Israel. Thirdly, Israel undertook to pay Transjordan the cost of building 20 kilometres of first-class road in compensation for the road between Tulkarem and Kalkilya. The agreement laid down a timetable for the transfer of the territories over a period of some four months and incorporated a map signed by the representatives of Israel and the Arab Legion indicating the new line.

The king reappeared when the agreement was signed. Seeing sad, tired faces all around him, he gave an order to a servant who returned with a bunch of roses. With a weary but sincere smile, Abdullah gave each of the Israelis a rose as he blessed their homeward journey, saying: 'Tonight we have ended the war and brought the peace.'

Although the agreement was signed on March 23 it required the ratification of Transjordan's prime minister who was still in Beirut. The final date for its ratification was therefore set for March 30, with the delay giving Abdullah more time to consider its implications, to elicit the views of Britain and the United States, and possibly even to secure their intervention to stop the agreement being ratified and to take steps to protect Transjordan for reneging on the agreement and against further military threats from Israel.

It was in fact Sir Alec Kirkbride who had suggested using the prime minister's absence in order to gain time. Kirkbride hoped to achieve two things: first, to alert the British government to the gravity of the situation and, secondly, to urge Abdullah to appeal personally to President Truman to exert pressure on the Israelis to modify their position. In order to convey to London the strength of his own feeling, Kirkbride described the last meeting at Shuneh as taking place in circumstances 'strongly reminiscent of Hitler and the late Czech President'. However, it seems that Kirkbride was more alarmed than the Transjordanians themselves by the terms of the proposed agreement, and his appeal to the Foreign

Office yielded nothing more substantial than a note to the State Department stating that the proposed deal would endanger Transjordan's internal security as well as her position in the Arab world. Abdullah's direct appeal to President Truman for help was equally unproductive. All it elicited was a general statement about the disfavour with which America would view any attempt to violate the provisions of the secret agreement. Both Kirkbride and Stabler were greatly disappointed with what they saw as the apathetic attitude of their respective governments. Unfortunately for the king, they could not offer any practical alternative to the ratification of the secret agreement, nor could they guarantee any external support for a policy of defiance.

The king reported on the disappointing results of his appeal to Britain and the United States to a special meeting of the Council of Ministers in Shuneh on March 26. He then turned to Glubb and questioned him about the extent of the Arab Legion's preparedness for renewed warfare. Glubb replied that the army was very small and that it only had ammunition for two or three days of fighting. Tawfiq Abul Huda, who had returned from Beirut, was critical of Britain for leaving Transjordan in the lurch, and the council resolved to invite the Israelis to another meeting and to accept their demands but amend some of the terms of the secret agreement.

Following the council meeting, Tall informed Harkabi that the prime minister approved the agreement in principle but that the king would like them to come again to Shuneh to discuss a number of points that had arisen. He stated specifically that instead of the provisions of the agreement remaining secret, the king now wished them to be included in the general armistice agreement being negotiated in Rhodes, that the timetable which governed the handing over of territory in the original agreement might now be deleted and all the territory handed over as soon as the Iraqis evacuated it, and that certain changes would be suggested in the border. Harkabi replied that they were willing to come to Shuneh, but only on condition that no changes in the border were proposed or discussed. This condition was accepted and they duly proceeded to Shuneh on the evening of March 30.

The party consisted of the same four who had gone on the two previous occasions, together with Reuven Shiloah whom it was thought wise to take because Colonel Jundi, the head of the Transjordan delegation at Rhodes, was going to be there, and because in any case the provisions of the secret agreement were now to be incorporated in the general armistice agreement which Shiloah was negotiating at Rhodes.

On arrival at Shuneh they found that with the exception of Abdullah Tall and Colonel Coaker, all the participants on the Transjordanian side had been changed so they were now faced with new and much tougher, shrewder, and more experienced characters. The protagonists on this occasion were Prime Minister Tawfiq Abul Huda, Defence Minister Fawzi el-Mulki and Hamad Farhan, the secretary to the Cabinet. This represented a distinct rise in level as far as both personal rank and individual ability were concerned. The king on this occasion did not go to bed when the actual proceedings began, but stayed up until four o'clock in the morning, in the company of a ravishing black-haired shaikh, sitting on the terrace of his house, until he was sure that the agreement had been reached and that he could safely see his visitors off the premises.

Abul Huda opened the proceedings with a long speech aimed at placing the current negotiations in the context of the original accord between the two sides on the partition of Palestine. 'Transjordan', he said, 'was pushed into a war which we strenuously tried to avoid. The only serious clash between our forces and yours, however, occurred in the Old City of Jerusalem. Other than that, we kept our forces within the boundaries of Arab Palestine. And this was according to the policy which both of us agreed on. We are very anxious to reach a final and permanent settlement with you.'

The negotiations centred on the disposition of the villages and towns in and around the strip of land 5 kilometres deep and 60 kilometres long that under the secret agreement was due to be handed to Israel. Eytan was amazed that the king had yielded so readily on Wadi Ara when he must have realized that he could have demanded a very high price in return. But during the

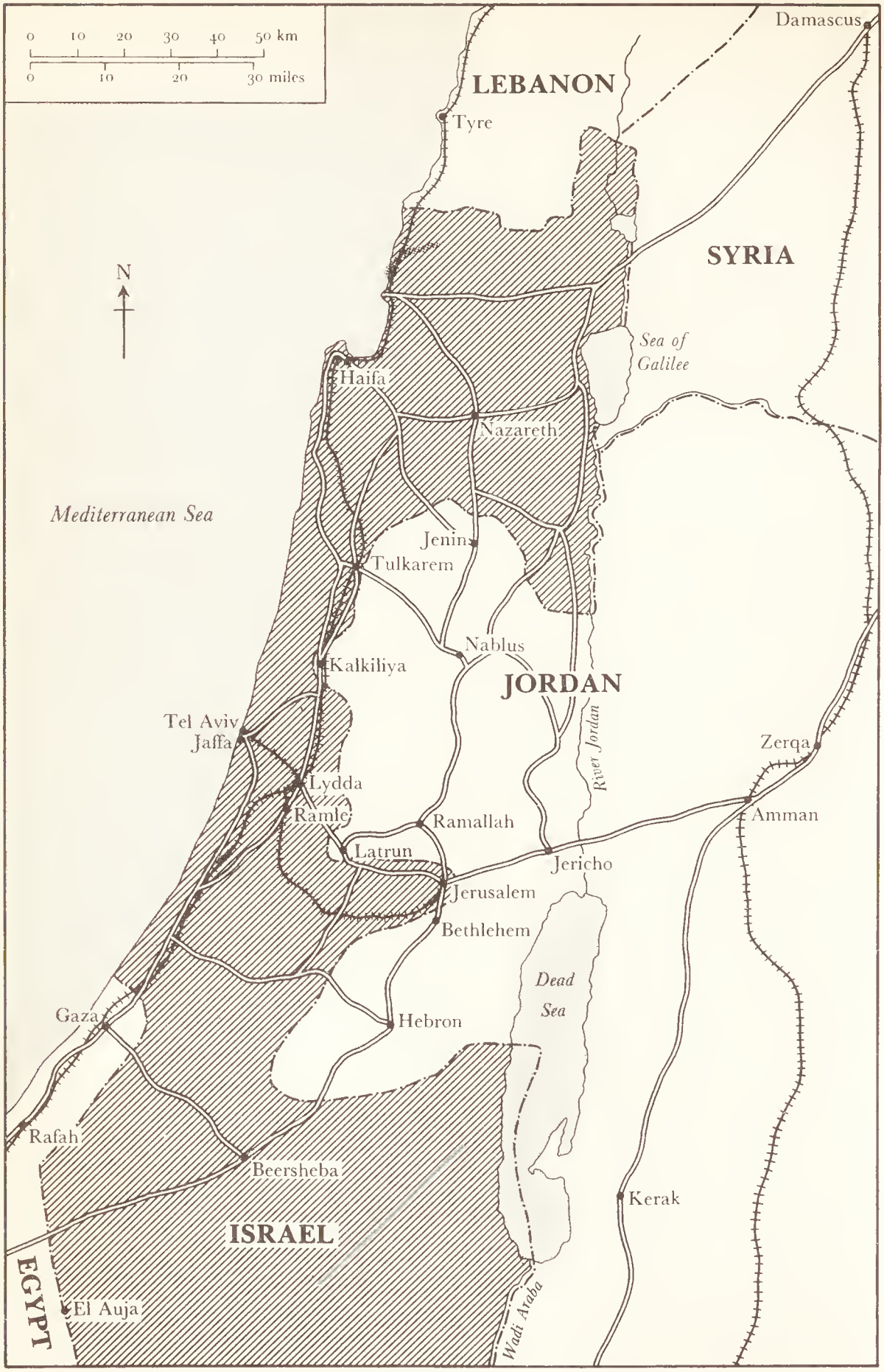
conversation on this occasion, he began to understand, or thought he understood, Abdullah's approach. In the whole of the Wadi Ara area there was not a single Arab town or even a major village. There were about a dozen small villages, of which the largest was Umm al-Fahem, and others called Ara, Arara, and other names unknown in the Arab world. King Abdullah had no great interest in these villages, and the road that the Iraqis had cut led from nowhere to nowhere as far as *he* was concerned. So he was not losing anything, and it would pay to make Israel a gesture.

It was quite a different story when they came to discuss the fate of and future of the three Arab towns, the names of all of which were very well known: Tulkarem and Kalkilya in the Triangle, and Beit Jibrin in the south, near Hebron. The cease-fire had left the first two in the hands of the Iraqi army and the last in Israel's hands. The Israelis were interested in obtaining Tulkarem and Kalkilya, while the king was equally anxious to secure possession of Beit Jibrin. The king had one reason and one reason only for refusing to withdraw the Legion from the two northern towns (at any rate there was only one reason he gave, and Eytan did not doubt his sincerity): he could not allow it to be said throughout the world that he, an Arab king, had surrendered Tulkarem and Kalkilya into the hands of the Jews. Ara and Arara were not important because no one had heard of them, but these were cities with familiar names so it was impossible for him to hand them over. The Israelis, for their part, were unwilling to yield Beit Jibrin. Their reasons had to do more with security than prestige—to hand it over would have meant redrawing the lines in the Hebron region in a way that could imperil their lines of communication between Jerusalem and Beersheba. Their refusal was made easier by the king's own refusal on Tulkarem and Kalkilya. So the three towns remained in the hands of those who held them at the end of the fighting, and this particular match ended in a draw.

The other match, more vigorously contested between Mulki and Yadin, was over the future of the villages. Mulki and Abul Huda buttressed their case for improving the terms that had

already been accepted by their faint-hearted colleagues with two powerful arguments. In the first place, they argued, the king did not really understand the implications of the secret agreement, and the surrender of the villages could bring about his downfall. Secondly, the surrender of the villages to Israel could set in train another wave of some 40,000 refugees and was therefore out of the question. Abul Huda left before the hard bargaining began, saying there was no need for his personal involvement in the technical details. The king, however, now wearing a long white night gown, said he would not go to sleep until the business had been completed. Mulki pleaded with him to go to sleep, saying there was no need to worry and that they would finish the business in the end, however long it took. Yadin explained to Mulki that Israel was not interested in the villages but only in the lands that the villagers used for farming and that it would be inconceivable for the villages to be on the Transjordanian side of the border while their lands were on the Israeli side. Mulki's reply was: 'General Yadin, the world does not know about lands; the world knows the name of villages. I don't care a damn about the lands; but give back some of the villages.' Although he saw the strength of the argument, Yadin stood his ground and refused to let Transjordan have even a single village. The only concession made by Yadin was to keep his troops out of the villages so as not to frighten their inhabitants, and it was a very minor concession since his only concern was with obtaining the strategically important high ground.

In the end the new line remained unaltered in spite of the determined efforts made by the Transjordanians, supported by the king's most winning smiles. It was to be incorporated into the Rhodes Agreement (see Map 13) with the help of Colonel Jundi and Reuven Shiloah who were both present, though for the most part as silent observers, throughout the proceedings. Article 4 was amended to read: 'Israel, for its part, has made similar changes for the benefit of the Hashemite Jordan Kingdom in the Hebron area, as delineated in blue ink in the map annexed thereto.' No such change was actually effected and this article was merely a fig leaf to cover Transjordan's nakedness. To Article 8 was added the



Map 13 The Jordanian–Israeli armistice demarcation line

stipulation that neither Israeli nor Transjordanian forces were to enter or to be stationed in the villages to be evacuated by the Iraqis, and a local Arab police was to be organized there for internal security purposes. As already noted, Yadin felt able to make this concession because he was not interested in the villages anyway, but concerned only to place his men at strategic points in the hills. Finally it was resolved that both parties should keep the fact of the direct meetings at Shuneh and the existence of these two agreements absolutely secret, though the content of these agreements was to be made public once the armistice was concluded at Rhodes.

The bargaining and drafting went on until 4 o'clock in the morning. As there was no English typewriter in the palace, the agreement was written by hand. The Israelis kept the copy written by Eytan, the Transjordanians that written by Shiloah. Throughout the proceedings, coffee, orange juice, chocolates, and cigarettes were handed round at intervals to fortify the negotiators; they were much appreciated by the Israelis as on this occasion Fawzi Mulki, ably supported by Hamad Farhan, proved to be a tough customer.

When Moshe Sharett had heard of the original agreement concluded at Shuneh on March 23, he could hardly believe his ears, acclaiming it as 'a tremendous diplomatic victory'. So at the end of the report to Sharett on the cosmetic changes made to that agreement during the long night of March 30, Eytan added a little piece by way of a personal reaction, a piece which as far as he was concerned qualified somewhat the foreign minister's accolade. The upright and humane director-general of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, moulded in the best tradition of the British civil service, clearly had a sense of guilt arising out of the agreement, both towards the Transjordanians who had been so moderate and reasonable all along, and towards the Palestinian victims of the cynical deal that he himself had so ably helped to clinch between Transjordan and Israel:

I do not know how Shiloah and Dayan felt about this, but certainly Yadin and I had qualms, and if you like moral scruples, about what we were

doing. Although the Transjordanians had agreed that there would be no further discussion of the new line, we discovered soon after we got to Shuneh that they in fact wanted to change the line to the extent of leaving on their side of it the largest villages in the area to be evacuated by the Iraqis—for example Umm al-Fahm, Baqa Gharbiya and Taibiya. We resisted this claim for all we were worth, and resisted it successfully. But both Yadin and I were acutely conscious of the Transjordanians' right to take up the position they did. We were, after all, discussing the future of villages which were wholly Arab in population and situated in territory under Arab control. They were not villages we possessed, but villages we would possess if the deal between us and the Transjordanians went through. In spite of all guarantees and fine phrases, it was as clear to the Transjordanians as to us that the people of these villages were likely to become refugees as soon as the Iraqis withdrew, and possibly even before. . . . The people who are letting these Arab villagers down are of course the Transjordanians, but that does not make it any more agreeable for us. We are partners to this deal, and it is we and not the Transjordanians who will be blamed for its results.

There was a final twist to the drama that featured so much discord as well as collaboration between the Zionists and the Hashemites during the three long nights at Shuneh. On the third and longest night, after the agreement was signed and the king was finally free to retire to his bedroom, Abdullah Tall, who had been hovering around in the palace, came forward to drive the Israeli party back to Jerusalem. Once they were in the car, Tall began by saying that he hoped to be the first Transjordanian officer to enter Syria, and that in any case, he was due to go to Damascus in a day or two to carry King Abdullah's good wishes to Col. Husni Zaim, the Syrian chief of staff who had overthrown the regime headed by President Shukri al-Quwatli in a bloodless coup on March 30. Tall asked what Israel's attitude would be if the king marched on Damascus, hinting that Israel's air force might play a useful part. Nothing would be easier than to paint Israel's aircraft with the colours and markings of Transjordan. If they were interested, he would be able to let them know in two or three days whether Abdullah intended to carry out his plan. The plan provided for the unification of Syria and Transjordan under a single government whose seat would be in Damascus. The king would rule

from Damascus, while his elder son Talal would remain in Amman as the prince of Transjordan. Tall hoped that the Israelis would not take advantage of Abdullah while he was engaged with the bulk of his forces elsewhere, and asked point blank what their attitude would be, to which they replied that they should not interfere. Tall believed that even if marching into Syria meant killing fellow Arabs, the king would not hesitate. He was anxious to rid himself of the British, and the overthrow of the regime in Damascus provided a golden opportunity.

The Zionist leaders, of course, were well aware of Abdullah's long-standing scheme to make himself the ruler of Greater Syria. They knew about his family history, his thwarted dynastic ambitions, and his longing to break out of Britain's tutelage. They knew of his dream to make Damascus his capital and his feeling that Amman was no substitute. Not only did they understand all this but they also professed themselves to be sympathetic and supportive. The Jewish Agency had always led the amir of Transjordan to believe that it looked with favour on his ambition to conquer Syria, and this was indeed one of the props of the understanding between the two sides. The Agency did not pledge its active support for the realization of this particular ambition, but it did promise not to stand in his way. An appeal by Abdullah to Israel to lend him military support for the long-awaited march on Damascus was therefore not as bizarre as it might seem at first sight.

Yet when Ben-Gurion learnt of Tall's request he rejected it instantly, telling Eytan it was out of the question. Convinced, quite mistakenly, that Ernest Bevin was Zaim's secret backer, Ben-Gurion had no desire to become embroiled in the proposed plot by what he saw as one British Middle Eastern puppet against another.

The Israeli–Jordanian armistice agreement

The fourth and final phase in the negotiations between Israel and Transjordan started with the initial approval of the agreement with Abdullah and ended with the signature of the general

armistice agreement in Rhodes on April 3. Officially Bunche had not been notified about the direct talks that had been taking place between the two parties elsewhere, but he knew that such talks were taking place and he patiently awaited their outcome. Meanwhile, the representatives on the warm and hospitable Greek island discussed minor technical matters such as the reduction of forces and their distribution in the various sectors. Disagreements on these matters did not constitute a serious obstacle to the successful conclusion of the talks. When Colonel Jundi and Reuven Shiloah flew back to Rhodes with the approved maps and told Bunche that their countries were ready to sign an armistice agreement, he was surprised but delighted. All that remained for him to do was to dress up the provisions of the agreement in the appropriate legal phraseology and to place them within a formal UN framework which was faithfully copied from the Israeli–Egyptian armistice agreement. In a more festive mood, he also presided over the final session at which the agreement was signed.

The signing of the general armistice agreement represented an important landmark in the history of Transjordan and in the development of the relations between Transjordan and the State of Israel. The agreement was signed in the name of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. It was the first time that this title was used officially. Palestine and Transjordan gave way to Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and the official nomenclature reflected the new reality. The name Palestine disappeared, at least from the map. Arab Palestine, or what remained of it, was officially designated as West Jordan, or more colloquially as the West Bank, while former Transjordan was known from now on as East Jordan or the East Bank. In a very real sense, therefore, the ceremony over which the distinguished representative of the United Nations presided with such abundant charm and good humour marked not only the birth of a new phase in the relations between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the State of Israel but also the official demise of Arab Palestine.

The general armistice agreement itself delineated, with the aid of maps signed by the two sides, what was officially called the

armistice demarcation line but to all intents and purposes became the border between the two countries until 1967. In the Araba, between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba, the armistice line coincided with the international border; on the Iraqi front, it corresponded to the agreement with Abdullah; in the Jerusalem sector to the 'sincere cease-fire' agreement of 30 November 1948; and in the Jerusalem–Hebron–Dead Sea sector it essentially followed the cease-fire line of 18 July 1948.

The agreement did not tackle the complex problems of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Latrun, and the economic enterprises on the Dead Sea and in Naharayim. But under Article 8, it was agreed to set up a joint committee, without UN representatives, to deal with all these and other questions on which, in Dr Bunche's optimistic phrase, there was agreement in principle. In the event, however, except for the resumption of the railway service to and from Jerusalem, these questions remained unresolved throughout the eighteen years during which the armistice between Israel and Jordan remained in force.

The agreement did not formally signify Israeli recognition of the annexation of the West Bank to Jordan. It was explicitly stated in Article 2 that the provisions of this agreement would in no way prejudice the rights, claims, and position of either party in the ultimate peaceful settlement of the Palestine question. In other words, the armistice demarcation lines were only temporary lines, dictated by military considerations, without prejudice to future territorial settlements. Like the agreements with Egypt and Lebanon, as the identical preamble made clear, the armistice agreement between Israel and Jordan was not a final peace settlement but a provisional measure designed to facilitate the transition from the truce to a permanent peace in Palestine.

Despite its shortcomings, the armistice agreement with Jordan represented a major victory for Israeli diplomacy. Considerable territorial and strategic gains in the Wadi Ara area had been secured without any further bloodshed and without endangering Israel's position in the international arena. The whole of the Little Triangle, as this area was popularly called, to differentiate it from

the Big Triangle that stretched from Nablus to Jenin and Tulkarem, was added to the territory of the state of Israel. The newly born state had achieved its objectives through a highly effective combination of diplomatic moves with limited military moves. Through Operation *Fait Accompli*, which was limited in scope and conducted under strict political constraints, Israel had extended her border down the Gulf of Aqaba. By resorting to military threats during the negotiations for redrawing the line in the Triangle, Israel had achieved a much improved line of defence in the centre of the country which was also its soft underbelly. Only in the Jerusalem sector were the Israeli objectives not achieved through negotiation and the temporary armistice arrangements became frozen. But at the time when the decision to postpone the resolution of this set of problems to a later stage was taken, a peace settlement with Jordan looked not only attainable but almost the inevitable next step.

For King Abdullah, too, despite all the concessions he had to make, and all the protests he had to face, this agreement was preferable to any of the available alternatives. Another military confrontation with the large and battle-hardened Israeli army might have wiped out all his territorial gains in Palestine and even cost him his throne if the Arab Legion were crippled in the process. Abdullah bought an armistice agreement with parcels of land taken from under the feet of the Iraqi army and then used this agreement to get the troublesome Iraqis to go home quietly. Moreover, by concluding the agreement, he secured *de facto* if not *de jure* Israeli recognition of his control of Palestinian territory not formerly his. In one diplomatic swoop he had restored the special relations that he had always had with the Zionist movement and at the same time quashed the hopes of other Arab quarters of setting up a separate state in Arab Palestine.

After Jordan came Syria's turn to negotiate an armistice with Israel. Of all the Arab countries, Syria proved the toughest nut to crack. The negotiations were the most protracted, lasting nearly four months, and the most difficult. In the course of the fighting the Syrians had entrenched themselves on the Israeli side of the international border and the attempts to push them back across

Map 14 Palestine following the armistice agreements of 1949

the Jordan were unsuccessful. The course of the negotiations was also affected by Husni Zaim's coup, which set the pattern for military intervention in Arab politics and for the overthrow of the old order which was held responsible for the loss of Palestine. Although Zaim had promised his co-conspirators a fight to the finish against Zionism, once he had captured power he made a determined effort to come to terms with Israel. He offered to meet Ben-Gurion face to face in order to conclude a peace settlement. Zaim wanted to skip the armistice talks altogether and proceed directly to the conclusion of a peace, with an exchange of ambassadors, open borders, and normal economic relations. As an additional incentive, Zaim offered, in the context of an overall settlement, to settle 300,000 Palestinian refugees, nearly half the total number, in Syria. But since he was offering a separate peace agreement, Zaim wanted a modification of the border to give Syria half of the Sea of Galilee. Ben-Gurion declined to meet Zaim and insisted that before Israel would discuss peace and co-operation, Syria must withdraw her forces from Israel's territory and sign an armistice agreement based on the previous international border. It was on this basis that Syria did eventually sign the armistice agreement on July 20. Three weeks later Husni Zaim was overthrown.

With the conclusion of the agreement between Israel and Syria on July 20, the Rhodes armistice negotiations were completed. The first Arab–Israeli war was officially over (see Map 14).

14

The Sterile Armistice

Arab and Israeli stock-taking

One of the distinguishing characteristics of the armistice agreements signed at Rhodes was their temporary character. They were tailored to meet the needs of a brief transition period. It was taken for granted on the Israeli side that as soon as the armistice agreements had been concluded, peace talks would get under way with all the neighbouring states. At the time of the Rhodes conference, this expectation was not confined to the Israeli side but was shared, albeit with little or no enthusiasm, by the ruling classes or at least the rulers of the Arab states concerned: King Farouk, King Abdullah, Husni Zaim, and Riad al-Sulh. But soon after the Rhodes conference was over, Arab political activists and the Arab press started saying that this was only a truce, that the conflict continued, and that the Arab world would never agree to the existence of Israel. After the end of the Palestine war, there was a general tension in all the Arab countries, a feeling which might be described as bordering on nervous breakdown. This came about as a result of the acute sense of frustration at the failure of Arab diplomacy and arms in the war with Israel and the fear of future Israeli aggression.

The sense of humiliation and outrage, the deeply felt hatred of Israel, and the widespread fear of Israeli expansionism placed formidable obstacles on the road to reconciliation with the new state. Arab rulers could not remain impervious to the strong popular undercurrents of hostility towards Israel and Zionism. Half-hearted leanings towards accommodation with the new force were largely drowned by the clamour for revenge. Under the impact of strong popular resistance, the Arab leaders began to regret what was widely described as their 'surrender' to the

Zionists at Rhodes. And the charges of surrender were accompanied by calls from various political quarters for closing ranks, mobilizing all the Arab resources, and taking up arms in a second round against Israel.

Of all the Arab leaders, King Abdullah, as usual, was least affected by the powerful currents of belligerence that were sweeping through the Arab world in the wake of the Palestine defeat. From his vantage point there were powerful countervailing reasons for seeking peace with Israel. As a result of the war and the new armistice demarcation lines Jordan was cut off from the Mediterranean, and through peace with Israel Abdullah hoped to gain an outlet to the outside world. Peace with Israel was also necessary in order to enable Abdullah to consolidate his hold over the territories he had acquired in the course of the Palestine war. A second round against Israel would have provided her with the pretext to expand and could probably end with the destruction of the Arab Legion. In short, in Abdullah's view, the prosperity, the security, and the expansion of his kingdom all required a final peace settlement with Israel.

Abdullah believed when the armistice agreement was signed that it would lead to a comprehensive peace with Israel and he pursued this interest vigorously and involved some of his ministers. But it was not easy. For one thing, as Israel grew in strength, so did her appetite for land and lack of readiness for compromise. Moreover, both the British and the Americans suspected that if Abdullah were to embark on separate negotiations, he would be vulnerable to strong Israeli pressures and threats and might end up by losing more territory. Their aim was to explore the possibilities of a comprehensive peace settlement through the Palestine Conciliation Commission (PCC) that had been appointed by the United Nations for this purpose and they accordingly advised the king not to forge too far ahead with separate talks until the commission's own attitude was clearer. Abdullah was in favour of the Arab states being asked to send representatives to a joint meeting with the PCC though he had no illusions about the chances of agreement. If the other Arab states declined to work through the PCC or tried and achieved nothing,

Jordan would still be able to carry on direct negotiations with Israel and they would be less able to criticize her for doing so.

The king's first minister had no independent policy of his own on the conduct of relations with Israel. Cautious and risk-averse by nature, he preferred to tread a middle course between Abdullah's policy of peace at almost any price and the equally determined opposition to peace with Israel that was surging up in the Arab world, including Jordan. As a Palestinian, Tawfiq Abul Huda was particularly sensitive to his reputation inside and outside Jordan—a reputation that could only be tarnished through too close an identification with the king's policy.

The Israeli leaders had their own reasons for wanting to convert the armistice with Jordan into a final peace settlement. Such a settlement would not only break the circle of enmity round Israel's borders but might also encourage other Arab states to follow in Jordan's footsteps. Apart from these foreign policy considerations, social and economic problems made it necessary and urgent to start demobilizing and to cut down drastically on defence spending. But at the same time there were domestic political constraints on the government's ability to pursue a constructive peace policy. The internal struggle for power between the centre parties making up the coalition, with Mapai at their head, and the opposition on the extreme left and the extreme right curtailed the freedom of action available to the former. So as not to lose ground in popular esteem to Menachem Begin's rumbustiously chauvinistic Herut party, the government had to appear as no less staunch in its defence of the national interest. In addition to the political constraints, potent psychological factors impeded the process of bargaining and accommodation with the enemy. Foremost among these was what might be termed the Holocaust syndrome—the tendency to view the Arab threat in the light of the destruction of central Europe's Jewry by the Nazis during the Second World War and the consequent determination to base Israel's security not on the goodwill of outsiders or paper guarantees but on her own strength, on defensible borders, and on military deterrence. Security considerations were paramount

in the thinking and planning devoted to Israel's post-war relations with her neighbours.

Intensive consultations were held in Tel Aviv in April 1949 with experts from the Foreign Ministry, the IDF, and the Treasury to formulate the strategy and tactics that should guide Israel's representatives in the forthcoming talks with the PCC and the Arabs at Lausanne and the talks with the Jordanians in the Special Committee set up under Article 8 of the armistice agreement. At the first meeting Ben-Gurion defined the bringing in of immigrants to expand the country's population as the top priority in the years to come. Borders, he said, were never absolute and there was always the possibility of changing them later, and at that particular juncture immigration was more urgent and vital than anything else. It was within Israel's power, he observed, to capture the Triangle, the entire Galilee, and the Golan Heights, but such conquests would not strengthen Israel as much as would the doubling of her population. The fate of the state depended on immigration because without immigration there could be no settlement of the land, and only settlement constituted true conquest. In foreign policy Ben-Gurion wanted to support the independence of the Arab countries and to squeeze out the foreign powers so as to expand the scope for Israeli influence in the region.

The key question in the ensuing deliberations related to the future of the West Bank. Since the polar alternatives of formal consent to annexation by Jordan and capturing the area for Israel by military force were equally unacceptable, a consensus emerged in favour of an intermediate course: accepting the annexation *de facto* without recognizing it *de jure* and exacting the highest price possible for this acceptance. Israel was not to sign any document recognizing the annexation of parts of Palestine or Jerusalem to Jordan, but this axiom did not rule out *ad hoc* arrangements with Jordan.

A second major issue in the deliberations was the future of the Gaza Strip. Here two distinctly different approaches emerged. One, put forward by Sasson, called for giving the entire coastal strip around Gaza to Abdullah in order to divert him from the

pursuit of Greater Syria. The other approach was elaborated by Reuven Shiloah, who pointed out that Abdullah's interest in Greater Syria transcended his need for an outlet to the sea and could therefore not be deflected by giving him such an outlet at Gaza. Nearly all the other participants sided with Shiloah in this debate. They were against giving the Gaza Strip to Jordan and for an attempt to work out some sort of an arrangement with Egypt: either by handing it over to Israel, or by an Egyptian–Israeli condominium, or, failing all else, by maintaining the status quo without formal annexation to Egypt.

Jerusalem was a third major issue on the agenda. Colonel Dayan, who had been designated as the Israeli representative to the Special Committee called for by Article 8 of the Israeli–Jordanian armistice agreement, reported that the Jordanians were in no hurry to appoint their representatives or to negotiate further arrangements for Jerusalem because they knew that Israel would not concede anything. In his view only the IDF could compel the Jordanians to carry out the obligations they had assumed by signing the armistice, and he spoke in favour of trying to take over the whole city, with special rights for Muslims and Christians over the Holy Places in the Old City. Resistance to the proposed change in policy came from the foreign minister. Sharett pointed out that their position at the United Nations would be greatly eased if they could go there armed with a prior understanding with Abdullah. To illustrate his point about the risks involved in UN arbitration, Sharett quoted the Arab proverb about the two cats who found a block of cheese and asked the monkey to divide it between them. The monkey divided the cheese into two unequal parts and kept cutting slices for himself to equalize the parts. When the cats, realizing that they might lose all the cheese, said they were satisfied with the division and asked the monkey to stop, he replied: 'You may be satisfied but justice is not satisfied.'

Ben-Gurion declared himself to be in agreement with Sharett on the question of Jerusalem though he did not heed the latter's warning about the dangers of being drunk with victory. Whereas Sharett was groping for diplomatic solutions involving bargaining and accommodation with Abdullah, Ben-Gurion expected all

the concessions to come from the other side. It was vital for Israel, he said, to have the northern part of Jerusalem, up to Mount Scopus, and the entire western bank of the Dead Sea, and if Israel could not get them through negotiation with Abdullah, she should prepare to take them by other means.

It would be a mistake to think that Ben-Gurion took such a hard line on the forthcoming talks with Jordan because he was peculiarly hostile towards this country. On the contrary, he explicitly stated that Israel and Jordan had common interests and that it was desirable to reach an understanding with Jordan, even for a limited period. But he was simply not prepared to contemplate substantive Israeli concessions in order to achieve an agreement when he had at his disposal such a devastatingly effective means as the IDF for dictating his terms to the other side.

On April 15, after the first of these high-level meetings, Sasson, Eytan, and Dayan went to see King Abdullah at his winter palace at their request. The Israeli attitude on this occasion was more friendly and reasonable than during the previous meetings to conclude the armistice. The Israelis agreed that areas governed by Article 6 of the armistice agreement should remain intact and that the villagers would be given free passage back and forth to the Arab lines.

King Abdullah stated that the Jordanian delegation to the meeting of the PCC at Lausanne would be headed by Fawzi el-Mulki and that it would include four to six Palestinian notables. By including so many Palestinians in the delegation, the king evidently intended to demonstrate the extent of Palestinian support for himself personally and for the merger of the West Bank with Jordan. However, he doubted whether an accord could be reached at Lausanne and wanted to settle all matters privately with the Israelis as he had done during the armistice negotiations at Rhodes. He foresaw that his delegation would be isolated at Lausanne, he feared that his neighbours were likely to ditch him there, and he was therefore anxious to secure in advance the support of the Israeli delegation. He said that Jordan would be prepared to accept a peace agreement at Lausanne regardless of the attitude of the other Arab states and he invited the Israelis to

return a few days later to work out the details with his prime minister.

The Israelis asked what his general requirements would be and he said he still wanted a port on the Mediterranean, a solution to the refugee problem, and the unfreezing of Arab financial assets in Israel. Asked to give more details about the port, he said that it should be either in the vicinity of Gaza with access via Beersheba or at Acre with access through Nazareth. This seemed to take his visitors aback. They said that it would obviously cut Israel in two and suggested instead full transit facilities to and through Haifa. The king jokingly countered by offering them transit facilities to Aqaba if Jordan took over Beersheba and also offered to be helpful in connection with the Dead Sea and the Palestine Electric Corporation's concessions at Naharayim. They pointed out that the Israeli government had been attacked already for having given such good terms to Jordan. The king answered that he had been attacked universally for having accepted those terms. He did promise, however, to instruct his government to appoint representatives to the Special Committee called for by the armistice agreement and to commence talks soon.

The Special Committee

The Jordanian representatives to the Special Committee were duly named. They were Col. Ahmed Sidki el-Jundi and Capt. Ali Abu Nuwar who had represented their country at the Rhodes talks and had just been appointed to the Israeli–Jordanian Mixed Armistice Commission (MAC). This MAC had been set up under the Israeli–Jordanian armistice agreement and functioned alongside the other MACs set up by the armistice agreements with Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria. These agreements included various provisions for no man's land, demilitarized zones, and the limitation of forces in border areas. The latter gave rise to interminable disputes, especially in Jerusalem and on the Syrian front. The agreements also established the four MACs, each of which consisted of two Israeli representatives, two Arab representatives, and a United Nations officer serving as chairman. In

the first period following the signing of the armistice agreements, the MACs dealt mainly with the implementation of the decisions regarding such matters as the exchange of prisoners of war, the reduction and withdrawal of military forces, and the drawing of the demarcation lines. But their basic function was to supervise the armistice—to investigate complaints, to rectify violations, and to settle disputes. Since the votes of the Israeli and Arab representatives cancelled out, it was usually the UN chairman who made the decisions and was left to try and enforce them as best he could. The result was to inflame innumerable trivial matters into international disputes, as was the case with the poor Jewish family whose outside lavatory was only yards away from an Arab Legion post and whose attempt to build another lavatory apparently contravened the armistice agreement. But there were also instances of co-operation within the framework of the MACs as, for example, when Israeli and Jordanian search parties were despatched to separate the barbed wire and retrieve the false teeth of a nun who had inadvertently dropped them when leaning across her nunnery window. The Israeli–Jordanian MAC was kept busier than its three counterparts because of the relatively long border it had to supervise, and because of the manifold and acute problems of this border which separated not just armies but living communities and in some cases families.

Only the Israeli–Jordanian armistice agreement included a provision for the creation, in addition to the MAC, of a Special Committee composed of two representatives of each party 'for the purpose of formulating agreed plans and arrangements designed to enlarge the scope of this Agreement and effect improvements in its implementation'. The Special Committee could consider any matter submitted to it by one of the parties. But it was specifically enjoined to formulate agreed plans and arrangements on the following questions regarding which the text of Article 8 misleadingly claimed that an agreement in principle already existed: free movement of traffic on vital roads, including the Bethlehem and Latrun–Jerusalem roads, resumption of the normal functioning of the cultural and humanitarian institutions on Mount Scopus and the free access to them; free access to the

Holy Places and the use of the cemetery on the Mount of Olives; resumption of the operation of the Latrun pumping station; provision of electricity for the Old City, and resumption of the operation of the railway to Jerusalem.

There was a considerable overlap between the functions of the Special Committee and those of the Israeli–Jordanian MAC. All that the Armistice Agreement had to say on this subject was that the former would have exclusive competence over such matters as might be referred to it and that the plans it agreed might be supervised by the MAC. The key difference, however, was that the MAC was chaired by a UN officer from the United Nations Truce Supervisory Organization (UNTSO), whereas the Special Committee was not. It provided a channel for direct negotiation between the parties without the intervention of any third party. Israel had long shown the desire to settle the problem of Jerusalem directly with Jordan, and the Special Committee provided a convenient means of doing so without taking into account the UN interest in the city. It was also thought that without outside assistance Jordan would accede more rapidly and generously to Israeli demands. Hence the pressure exerted on Abdullah to appoint his representatives to this committee.

Dashing, one-eyed Colonel Dayan was appointed as Israel's chief representative to both committees and quickly carved out a major role for himself in policymaking as well as in the day-to-day conduct of Israeli–Jordanian relations. A special relationship developed between the young officer and the ageing prime minister, and the fact that Dayan received his orders from Ben-Gurion and reported to Ben-Gurion directly enabled him to accumulate power and influence out of all proportion to his rank. Sharett, who was capable of standing on his dignity, made no attempt in this case to fend off prime ministerial encroachment on his prerogatives. What Sharett and his men found much more difficult to tolerate were the arrogance, the aggressive approach, and the blatant expansionism of the prime minister's protégé.

Dayan was far from satisfied with the armistice demarcation lines and was particularly outspoken in arguing that the line with

Jordan—the one he himself had negotiated—was unsatisfactory and could not possibly serve as the final border. Once the Arabs showed themselves reluctant to move beyond the armistice to peace and started reneging on some of the obligations they had incurred under the armistice agreements, Dayan emerged as the most uncompromising advocate of the use of force to secure Israel's interests regardless. Dayan began to propound the view that the War of Independence was not finished, that Israel's borders had to be enlarged, and that it was within Israel's power to enlarge them. He did not openly advocate going to war to seize more territory. Rather, he claimed that if war broke out, and his analysis of the Arab position left no room for doubt that a war would indeed break out, then he was for exploiting it to enlarge Israel's borders. For Dayan expansionism was not just an answer to specific problems but a general worldview, a philosophy of life that measured achievements principally in territorial terms.

Dayan's detractors, and they included virtually the entire staff of the Foreign Ministry, maintained that this Zionist impulse to acquire more and more land and the reliance on force as the final arbiter did not serve well the interests of the State of Israel. They looked aghast at the heavy-handed, devious, and plainly unscrupulous methods employed by Dayan and his fellow officers in the conduct of armistice affairs. Much more than a difference of style was involved. At the Foreign Ministry it was felt that there was no proper political control over the conduct of armistice affairs and that consequently short-term security considerations tended to outweigh Israel's long-term interest in peaceful relations with the Arabs in general and Jordan in particular. The aggressive and uncompromising approach of the military was resented not simply because it damaged Israel's image abroad but because it made it harder for Abdullah to pursue his policy of accommodation and strengthened the anti-Israeli element in Jordan.

It also cast a shadow over the work of the Special Committee. Three meetings of the Special Committee were held towards the end of April, from all of which UN observers were excluded at Dayan's insistence. Three major items were on the agenda: the

withdrawal of military forces, the division of no man's land, and the physical demarcation of the new lines by a barbed-wire fence. The map that Dayan took to these meetings was the one he and Col. Abdullah al-Tall had signed on 30 November 1948 in connection with the 'sincere and absolute cease-fire' for Jerusalem. On that occasion they had used a 1:20,000-scale map, Dayan tracing his front line in red while Tall traced his in green. They used soft wax pencils and the lines they drew on the map were 2–3 millimetres thick, or 40–60 metres on the ground. The line covered houses and even entire streets, and with the passage of time the wax 'sweated'. And as the line on the map spread, so did the demands of the amateurish, but far from naïve, one-eyed cartographer.

The most contentious question proved to be the division of no man's land, which included parts of the railway line and Government House, the former residence of the British high commissioner that had been built on the Hill of Evil Counsel with its magnificent view of the Old City to the north, Bethlehem to the south, and the Dead Sea to the east. Dayan offered to remove the railway from the agenda, pretending that a decision had been made to build a new line entirely within the Israeli side, but the Jordanian representatives obtained their king's consent for giving Israel a 200-metre strip in the south of Jerusalem through which the railway line ran. So the whole of the railway passed into Israeli hands, to Ben-Gurion's surprise and satisfaction since nothing was requested in return.

Initially, the Jordanian representatives also agreed in principle to the division of Government House which served as the headquarters of UNTSO. But fierce international protest and the arguments of Abdullah al-Tall against giving the lion's share of this strategically important position to the Israelis persuaded the king to retract his agreement, and the Government House compound remained under the flag of the United Nations.

The Jordanians were prepared to evacuate not just the village of Latrun but the entire salient with the road that passed below and the pumping station in return for Israeli withdrawal from certain villages to the north-east of Latrun. Dayan considered the

demand to be excessive and since what he did offer was unacceptable, the question remained unresolved.

Mount Scopus was of even greater importance to Israel than Latrun because the Hebrew University and the Hadassah Hospital were there and because it was the highest point in north Jerusalem and as such a key strategic point, overlooking the roads from Ramallah and from Jericho as well as the Old City. The Jordanians were prepared in principle to offer Israel free access to the Mount Scopus enclave but they balked at Dayan's demand for allowing Israel to build a new road on which she would be able to transport troops, tanks, and artillery. So no agreement was reached. Nor was there agreement on other radical proposals for exchanging Jordanian-held land for Arab quarters that had been captured by Israel in the course of the fighting. The Jordanian delegates announced that they were proceeding to Lausanne and proposed that the Special Committee suspend its work until their return. This was badly received by the Israelis who said that they would not discuss peace with Jordan at Lausanne unless Jordan conformed to the armistice agreement and continued the Special Committee talks.

The first attempt to implement such decisions as had been reached on the division of no man's land met with stormy protest and violent resistance from the hapless inhabitants. The suburb of Beit Safafa in southern Jerusalem was doomed to be severed in the middle, the northern half close to the railway line going to Israel and the southern half remaining in Jordan. When a group of Israeli and Jordanian soldiers tried to put up a barbed-wire fence through the village, the angry villagers prevented them from completing the job. Dayan's solution was to carry out the division swiftly and ruthlessly. He notified the Jordanians that if they did not co-operate in enforcing the division, his soldiers would do it alone, by force if necessary. The next day, May 2, at 9 a.m., a new Jordanian delegation appeared with disciplined officers who firmly resumed the demarcation work and erected the barbed-wire fence. The village of Zur Bahar, with its dominating hillside position in south Jerusalem, also passed into Israel's hands.

Sharett's visit to Shuneh

Moshe Sharett fully recognized that Israel was no less responsible than Jordan for the failure to forge ahead with the solution of outstanding problems through the Special Committee. There was a difference, he explained to the Knesset Foreign Affairs Committee, between Jordan and the other Arab states. With Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria, Israel's interest lay in concluding swiftly a final peace settlement which would bring stability and permit mutually advantageous trading relations. This was not the case with Jordan. Here Israel's best interest lay in withholding for the time being formal recognition of Jordanian annexation of parts of Palestine and Jerusalem and concentrating instead on the solution of specific problems through the broadening of the armistice agreement and through a series of special agreements. The snag with this tactic, Sharett admitted, was that just as they themselves were saying to the Arab states that if they wanted a solution to the refugee problem they must make peace with Israel, so Abdullah could say to them that if they wanted a solution to various problems, they must enter into peace negotiations.

This was precisely what Abdullah did claim three days later, on May 5, when Sharett, accompanied by Lieutenant-Colonel Dayan and Major Harkabi, visited Shuneh. The king received the visitors, who had been brought by Abdullah al-Tall in his car with two other Arab Legion cars serving as a guard of honour, in the presence of Tawfiq Abul Huda. He began by expressing his pleasure that Sharett was meeting him and his prime minister together for the first time. Sharett replied that for him too this was a historic meeting, coming after a long break in their personal contact, and that the presence of the prime minister only enhanced its importance. Round the dinner table there were about ten people. Nothing of political significance was discussed during the dinner except when the king turned to Sharett and asked in a whisper what would become of the Gaza Strip and whether the Egyptians intended to stay there. Sharett replied that Egypt's intentions had not been made clear yet. At the business part of the meeting there were only five men: the three Israelis, the king and his prime minister.

The king and the prime minister opened the discussion by referring to the new dispute that had arisen over the line to which the Arab Legion was supposed to withdraw in the Little Triangle. Apparently there was a discrepancy in the maps of the two sides concerning this line. Colonel Dayan proposed that Israeli forces move into the undisputed area and the whole problem be cleared up within a week by the Special Committee. King Abdullah seemed very troubled by the new complication and mentioned several times the unrest in the villages concerned. Sharett promised that immediately upon their return orders would be issued to their forces in the Little Triangle.

Reassured, the king proceeded to deliver a lecture on the necessity for peace and the need to prepare public opinion for peace. Sharett replied, somewhat disingenuously, that they too were anxious for peace, hence the importance that they attached to the resolution of outstanding problems. They were disappointed, he said, that the work of the Special Committee had been interrupted before it could complete its task. They too were having problems with public opinion, and the interruption of the committee's work caused much anger and was not conducive to a spirit of conciliation.

The king politely inquired whether they intended to deal only with practical problems and whether they did not think that more general negotiations should commence, leading to a comprehensive peace settlement. Sharett replied that they must proceed gradually. The armistice agreement had laid the foundations, now they had to build the walls by resolving the outstanding problems and eventually they would build the roof with an overall agreement.

The prime minister now begged to speak frankly. It seemed to him that Sharett proposed to discuss only those issues from which Israel stood to gain. Sharett replied that, on the contrary, their final objective was peace but it was necessary to proceed gradually towards that destination. There were questions on the agenda of the Special Committee and there were questions on the agenda of the Lausanne conference. It would be only logical to proceed stage by stage, to work through the agenda of the Special

Committee and then to move on to the discussions in Lausanne, yet they would be prepared to carry on talks in Lausanne and Jerusalem simultaneously. His only concern was that problems of co-ordination between the Arab delegates to Lausanne would hold up consideration of the practical problems that need not wait until the final settlement.

Here the prime minister declared very firmly that they did not consider themselves bound by the position of the other Arab delegates and that they were prepared to conclude a peace agreement with Israel for the sake of their own country even if others were opposed.

Sharett stated that he was glad to hear this declaration, and that Israel, for her part, intended to conduct not multilateral negotiations but separate negotiations with each country, discussing only those matters that directly concerned the particular negotiating partner. On Jerusalem, declared Sharett, they would not enter negotiations with Egypt, Lebanon, or Syria, but only with the king. They did not concede any rights to the other Arab states over Jerusalem, except those that went with membership of the United Nations. Towards King Abdullah, on the other hand, their position was entirely different because both he and they were in Jerusalem and they therefore had to negotiate. Abdullah could not conceal his delight with this definition of the Israeli position. His face lit up and he looked at his prime minister as if to say: 'Did you hear that?!'

The prime minister then inquired whether Israel would agree to the 1947 UN partition resolution as the basis for the final settlement, or whether she intended to negotiate only on the basis of the existing situation. Sharett replied that the Arabs had never accepted the partition resolution and therefore it was now part of history; negotiations could proceed only on the basis of existing facts. The prime minister, feeling that Sharett had adopted a somewhat superior attitude, retorted angrily that in that case there was no point to any negotiations between the Arabs and Israel at all and there could be no peace.

Calmly, Sharett expounded the view that the UN partition plan was no longer relevant because it rested on a series of assumptions

that had not materialized. The first assumption was that it would be achieved by peaceful means. The second assumption was that the Arab part of Palestine would be constituted into an independent state. The third assumption was that the two sides would be prepared to form an economic union. All these assumptions were shattered. A war had broken out, Israel had defended herself, and a completely new situation had arisen. It was not possible to turn the wheel back. Sharett did not agree that negotiations would be pointless. The Arab world, he said, could not possibly want to leave things as they were because that would mean anarchy; it needed to stabilize the situation and to forge a lasting peace.

The king intervened to say that he too, like the Israelis, had entered the war against his will. The prime minister went further and said that in fact there had not been a war, and the king added that throughout the period of military operations his forces had not crossed the borders of the Jewish state as defined by the UN resolution. In truth, he said, the only place where their respective forces had clashed was Jerusalem, and there it was the Israelis who had provoked the fight.

The prime minister returned to the charge that Israel was behaving selfishly and trying to make gains without giving anything in return. Sharett replied that the solution to all the problems before the Special Committee rested on reciprocity: free access to Mount Scopus in return for free access from the Old City to Bethlehem; Jordanian withdrawal from Latrun in return for Israeli withdrawal from some villages. As for the questions reserved for the Lausanne talks, there too agreement would be to the advantage of both sides. Jordan and Israel had jointly issued the concessions to the Palestine Potash Company on the Dead Sea and the Palestine Electric Corporation in Naharayim and both countries were the losers as a result of the failure to resume operations.

Several times the king raised the question of Gaza, stressing how important it was for him to have a foothold on the coast. Sharett said that Israel could accommodate his needs through the port of Haifa. The king said this would not be enough, that

territorial control was essential, and that he reserved the right to raise the matter again at the Lausanne talks.

The king also expressed his concern over the refugee problem. Sharett said they knew that America intended to devote large sums of money to the settlement of the refugees in the Arab countries and that Israel would work to increase Jordan's share of this money so that refugee resettlement might be turned into a springboard for the economic development of His Majesty's country. His Majesty did not respond. Sharett expounded on the benefits that could accrue to both countries from joint irrigation schemes that would exploit the waters of the River Jordan. Both the king and prime minister were taken aback and said they thought that the time had not yet come for considering such projects.

Sharett therefore turned the conversation to the situation in Syria following Husni Zaim's *coup d'état* and mentioned the desirability of working out a common position in relation to Syria. Sharett was trying to find out whether there was any basis for the impression that Sasson had brought back from his last visit to Shuneh, namely that if the king could obtain Damascus, he would not insist on the annexation of Arab Palestine. But the prime minister was careful not to give anything away, saying casually that they were waiting to see the results of the Syrian elections. What about Syria's future, persisted Sharett. Did they think Syria should remain in her existing borders? Now the king perked up and announced self-importantly: 'If you are referring to the idea of Greater Syria, this idea is one of the principles of the Arab Revolt that I have been serving all along.' Thus ended the discussion on the Syrian question.

Towards the end of the meeting, which lasted three hours, the Israelis returned to the subject of the Special Committee and pressed for the resumption of its work. The king readily agreed but the prime minister was more reserved, pointing out that the formation of the new government would be completed during the following week and that this matter would have to be brought before it.

Another discussion took place on the final peace settlement.

Sharett concluded by saying that although detailed guidelines had already been issued to their delegation to the Lausanne talks, as a result of this important meeting he would repeat the guidelines more firmly and instruct his delegation to spare no effort in trying to reach an accord with the king's delegation on all the outstanding issues.

It was midnight. Although the meeting had made little progress, it ended on a friendly note. The king breathed a sigh of relief and sent his visitors on their way home.

To the historian, the most interesting aspect of the meeting at Shuneh was the debate on the origins of the 1948 war and on the continuing relevance or otherwise of the UN partition resolution of 29 November 1947. It would have been difficult to challenge Abdullah's version of events and Sharett made no attempt to do so. Abdullah said he had not wanted to go to war but a series of events beginning with Deir Yassin and ending with the Jewish breach of the cease-fire in Jerusalem had forced him to take action. Abul Huda had not wanted to go to war either and remained faithful throughout to the limited strategy for which he had obtained Britain's secret endorsement. It was Israeli attempts to capture the Old City that brought about the clash between the Arab Legion and the Haganah. Even during the war, the Jordanians continued to pursue a limited strategy and at no point tried to force their way across the frontiers of the Jewish state. By implication Abdullah was now claiming that it was not he but the Jews who had gone back on the secret understanding they had reached on the partition of Palestine.

The other point made by Abul Huda was that Jordan had not rejected the UN partition resolution but had accepted it all along, at least as far as the creation of a Jewish state was concerned, and was therefore not being inconsistent in demanding that this resolution should serve as the basis for peace negotiations. Abul Huda told Sharett that he had no right to talk to him as he would to the Egyptians or the others because he had not wanted war but had it forced upon him. Since Jordan did not initiate the war against Israel, she was not responsible for the consequences. Implicitly both Abdullah and Abul Huda seemed to be saying that

there had been a special relationship in the past based on the agreement to partition Palestine, that they wanted to preserve this special relationship, and that this fact should be taken into account in the forthcoming peace talks.

There was another point of interest about this meeting relevant to the question of peace. Israeli spokesmen had always claimed, in 1949 and subsequently, that they sought with all their hearts a just and lasting peace, but that the Arabs remained adamant in their rejection of Israel's right to exist. This was emphatically not true in the case of Jordan. What the meeting at Shuneh, as well as Sharett's address to the Knesset Foreign Affairs Committee, reveal is that in this case all the pressure to move swiftly forwards towards comprehensive peace came from Jordan; it was Israel that was holding back.

Any doubt on this score is dispelled by Sharett's report to the heads of departments at his ministry on May 25:

> The situation between us and Transjordan several weeks ago was as follows: Transjordan said—we are ready for peace *immediately*. We said—of course, we too want peace, but we cannot run, we have to walk. The foundations have already been laid in the armistice agreement. The walls are the agreements on Latrun, Mount Scopus, the railway etc., and then of course we shall put the roof. To this Transjordan replied: you only want to gain advantages from the process and then you will desert us. No, first we must establish peace. To this we replied again: it is not possible to run, we must learn to walk first.

Deadlock in the Special Committee

The reconstruction of the Jordanian government proceeded in an atmosphere of mounting popular discontent directed against its policy of accommodation with Israel. With more than a dash of hyperbole, Abdullah al-Tall described the rage experienced by the Palestinians at seeing their motherland consumed by wolves, with their Arab rulers serving the prey piece by piece to the mouths of the hungry wolves. This spectacle intensified their quest for revenge. When the king ordered the government to resign, they thought he was removing from power the treacherous

government headed by Tawfiq Abul Huda. But their joy was short-lived for Abul Huda stayed on as prime minister and simply added to his old Cabinet three Palestinian public figures who, according to Tall, had devoted their lives to the service of the British in Palestine.

Of the three new ministers, only Ruhi Abdul Hadi, who became minister of foreign affairs, was known for his pro-British and his pro-Hashemite leanings. The other two were not old supporters of Abdullah, and their appointment signalled that he understood that if he was to have the support of his Palestinian subjects he could no longer confine his favours to the small and subservient clique of East Bank politicians. Khulusi Khayri, minister of agriculture and commerce, and Musa Nasir, minister of communications, were progressive Palestinians, reared in the half-light of the British democratic tradition and intent on reforming the Jordanian political system into a British-style constitutional monarchy.

One of the new Cabinet's first acts was to appoint Abdullah al-Tall and Hamad Farhan, with Ahmad Khalil as legal adviser, as Jordan's representatives to the Special Committee. When the Special Committee renewed its work in mid-May, the Israelis wished to discuss only two points—the Latrun salient and access to Mount Scopus. In return for the salient and access to Mount Scopus, the Israelis were willing to give only the use of the Bethlehem road. The Jordanian representatives said they would agree to both points only if Israel returned the Arab quarters in new Jerusalem. But the Israelis refused to consider any proposals relating to Jerusalem itself.

Dayan reported to Ben-Gurion that Farhan and Tall were very bitter, claiming that only the Jews benefited from the agreements made in the past. The anger of the inhabitants of Tulkarem and Kalkilya also affected them and made them more inflexible in the negotiations. Dayan consoled his chief with the thought that he had one means of exerting pressure: according to the latest map, the village of Latrun and Deir Ayub were in no man's land and it was therefore permissible to fire on the inhabitants if they did not get out. At the same time Dayan admitted to Ben-Gurion that the

Legionnaires were behaving very fairly, keeping to agreements even if they were unfavourable and careful to tell the truth when they gave evidence before a UN committee, even if it pointed against them.

The prospects of agreement in the Special Committee disappeared as the Jordanians stiffened their position and stepped up their demands. This was due not just to the pressure of public opinion but also to the belief that the armistice agreement would restrain Israel from renewing hostilities to attain her ends. Moreover, the government had reached the conclusion that it would be preferable to leave all the negotiations to the Lausanne conference, and the king apparently concurred in this policy following Sharett's disappointing response to his plea for peace. Dayan asserted privately that he was gloomier about the prospects of continuing peace in Jerusalem than at any time since he had assumed command the previous August. He advised the Israeli government to request the United Nations to return the Jewish sections of Mount Scopus to complete Israeli control under the terms of the agreement signed in July 1948 for UN protection on Mount Scopus 'until hostilities end'. He further proposed to inform Jordan bluntly that Israel intended to have free access by agreement or otherwise. He felt that Jordan was bound by Article 8 of the armistice agreement to grant free access and that refusal to do so would justify strong Israeli measures.

The atmosphere surrounding the Special Committee talks was much the same as that which had characterized the armistice negotiations. The Israelis were presenting strong and irrevocable demands as well as stipulating what the Jordanians should agree to receive in return, while at the same time indicating that if their demands were not satisfied, they would obtain them by other means. Very little was offered to Jordan by way of positive inducements. The Israelis, for example, seemed intent on providing electricity for the Old City and on giving the Jordanians free use of the Bethlehem road. They did not appear interested in the fact that the Jordanians had no particular desire for either. The unabating storm of criticism from the Palestine Arabs, however, made the king and his ministers less amenable to further attempts

at blackmail and intimidation. Most of them preferred the Israelis to make their threats good by force rather than meekly submit to the threat of force. The only possibility of reaching agreement, they insisted, would be for Israel to curb her voracious territorial appetite and to show some signs of willingness to negotiate in the genuine meaning of this term.

From May 29 until August 8, while the Lausanne conference was in progress, the Special Committee remained suspended. During this period Dayan's patience seemed to be exhausted and he resorted increasingly to unilateral action which envenomed Israel's relations with the Arabs and brought her into open conflict with the United Nations. On June 6, in an effort to enforce the division of the Government House compound, Israeli soldiers entered the neutral area that had remained under the UN flag, erected a barbed-wire fence, installed machine-gun posts, and laid a minefield. This action brought forth such an intemperate letter of protest from the chairman of the Israeli–Jordanian MAC that it later had to be withdrawn on orders from above.

Within the MACs, with the exception of the Lebanese one, Israel became embroiled in a growing number of disputes, and the UN chairmen usually upheld Arab complaints of Israeli breaches of the armistice. The villagers of Wadi Fukin, on the border between Israel and Jordan near Hebron, were forced across the border and were not allowed to go back to their homes in Israel despite the ruling of the MAC.

Israel's treatment of Baqa el Gharbiya, an Arab village at the northern end of the Little Triangle—the border area ceded to Jordan—constituted the first major test case of her attitude to the armistice. In this village there were 1,500 Palestinian refugees in addition to its permanent residents when it was handed over by the Arab Legion to Israel under the armistice agreement. Article 6 of the agreement guaranteed the full rights of residence, property, and freedom to all the inhabitants of this and the other villages in the Little Triangle. Notwithstanding this solemn undertaking, an argument arose between Ben-Gurion's men and Sharett's men on whether Israel ought to treat the Arab residents she acquired with the new territory ruthlessly or humanely. Ben-Gurion himself was

altogether oblivious to the human tragedy of the Arabs of Palestine, placing his pragmatic conception of the national interest above those of any individuals or minority groups. 'Land which has Arabs on it and land which has no Arabs on it are two completely different kinds of land', he said to his party colleagues, who were left in no doubt that his own concern was with land, not with people. With his advisers he discussed more directly the treatment to be meted out to the Arabs of the Little Triangle. The discussion went as follows:

BEN-GURION: Do we want the Arabs on the part handed over by Abdullah to leave the place or to stay?

ELIAHU [ELIAS] SASSON: It would be better if they stay and there are several reasons for this.

ZALMAN LIFSHITZ: I think it would be better if they left.

BEN-GURION: I want to think further about this matter.

By early August the Foreign Ministry point of view represented by Sasson must have been overruled, for Israeli soldiers ruthlessly expelled all the refugees and several of the regular inhabitants of Baqa el Gharbiya across the armistice line into Jordan. In a report to the Prime Minister's Office and to the foreign minister, Colonel Dayan, the staff officer for Mixed Armistice Commissions, explained the IDF tactics in this matter in the past and in the future.

There is a fear that even if we are justified in all the reasons we gave against the return of the refugees of Baqa, the question will be put to the vote and be decided by a majority of the chairman and the Arab delegates—against us. Therefore, we are seeing to the spread of rumours among the Arab refugees to say that whoever is returned to Israel will not enjoy the help of the Red Cross and also, since his return would be against the wishes of the government of Israel, there is no chance that one day he would have back his land. We hope accordingly that even if it is decided that we should take back the refugees, the majority would refuse to return.

The men concerned with Israel's image abroad as a newcomer into the community of nations were troubled by the tactics of the

IDF's staff officer for armistice affairs. Their main concern was not that these heavy-handed tactics were bound to stir resentment and antagonism on the part of its victims but that subversion of the armistice regime would undermine Israel's international position and play into the hands of her enemies. Walter Eytan's misgivings at the time the armistice agreement was signed—that despite all the promises and the fine phrases, the Arabs of the Little Triangle would be molested and maltreated—were now seen to have been fully justified. Yet there can be little doubt that Dayan's strong-arm tactics were in conformity with Ben-Gurion's wish to turn land which had Arabs on it into land that had no Arabs on it.

Inevitably, there was a political price to pay for this strategy and tactics in terms of Israel's relations with Jordan. No progress was made in the Special Committee following the renewal of its meetings. The new Jordanian delegates were less well disposed towards Israel than their predecessors had been and there was no longer any question of unrequited concessions. The railway remained the only matter to have been successfully handled by the Special Committee, before and after its adjournment. On all other matters the Special Committee was unable to formulate any agreed plans. The new Jordanian delegates, while maintaining that they still agreed in principle to free access to Mount Scopus, were unable to reach agreement with the Israelis on how free access might be worked out. Since Mount Scopus was such a strategic location, overlooking the Old City and most of the main arteries leading to Arab Jerusalem from Jordan-controlled territory, the Jordanians were not willing to give the Israelis complete freedom of passage without any form of control.

What was important to the Jordanians was the return of certain Arab quarters held by the Israelis, and they were determined to make use of the Mount Scopus situation as a bargaining point for their demands. There was nothing in Article 8 which required the Jordanians to accept any plans and arrangements for free access to Mount Scopus unless they agreed to them. And in the atmosphere of suspicion and ill-will that marked the second phase of

the Special Committee meetings, they did not agree to any of the plans proposed by Israel.

Dayan had definite ideas on what should be done to break the diplomatic stalemate and he presented his ideas verbally to Ben-Gurion and followed them up with written memoranda. On September 29, in a memorandum to the chief of staff, Dayan proposed military action to capture Mount Scopus:

> True, Mount Scopus is on the other side of the Arab line, but at the time when we recognized this line it was agreed that there would be free passage to Mount Scopus. Our recognition of the line was conditional on an opening in this line for free movement by us to Mount Scopus. If they do not permit that, our recognition of the line expires. Graphically, one can say that we recognized this wall on condition that there would be a door in it for us; if the door is closed, we do not recognize the wall and we shall break through it.

Without control of Mount Scopus, continued Dayan, their military position in Jerusalem would remain vulnerable. Moreover, with the passage of time the armistice lines would harden into permanent borders. Unless Israel acted quickly to enforce her rights, the decision reached at Rhodes would be worthless. After all, it was not up to the Arabs but up to Israel to give tangible expression to her rights, and her failure to do so, in Dayan's view, amounted to a surrender of those rights.

Ben-Gurion did not accept Dayan's proposal. Although he was convinced that the plan could be executed, he did not sanction the use of force. His main reason was that the time had come for concentrating on the tasks of peace: the care and rehabilitation of immigrants, the settlement of the land, and the injection of life into the desert regions. The Land of Israel, Ben-Gurion said, would not remain theirs solely through war and the power of the army. For Ben-Gurion the book of war was closed—for the time being at least.

15

An Exercise in Futility

The Palestine Conciliation Commission

With the Special Committee at a standstill, Israel and Jordan turned their attention to Lausanne where the Palestine Conciliation Commission held a conference which lasted from 27 April until 15 September 1949. The PCC marked an important turning-point, for the worse, in the evolution of Arab–Israeli relations. The fundamental challenge was to continue the process begun by Dr Ralph Bunche at Rhodes, to convert the armistice agreements into a lasting peace. Yet, even before the last of these agreements was signed, this process began to falter and was soon to be reversed. The PCC was unable to arrest the deterioration in Arab–Israeli relations, let alone settle all the outstanding questions between them. During the first year of its existence the PCC spent hundreds of hours in discussions, held one major international conference at Lausanne, and generated thousands of reports, letters, and cables—but success persistently eluded it. It went round and round in circles and in the end utterly failed to bridge the gulf between Arabs and Israelis on any of the major issues. Judged by its results, the commission's attempt at conciliation was an exercise in futility.

The basic cause behind the PCC's failure to promote a settlement was that the Israeli and Arab positions were so far apart and so inflexible that the gap between them was unbridgeable. Israel's leaders yearned for peace and acceptance by their neighbours, but not at any price. The armistice agreements lent international legitimacy to the borders of the new state, consolidated its security, and provided a sound basis for economic development, immigrant absorption, and settlement. There was a school of thought, of which Abba Eban was the most articulate spokesman, which said that the armistice agreements met all Israel's

needs, that she did not need anything else, and that by appearing too anxious to attain peace Israel would only encourage the Arabs to demand a price for it. Moshe Sharett recognized that from a tactical point of view it would be a mistake to dwell constantly on Israel's need for peace lest the Arabs interpret it as a sign of weakness, but in the long run he felt that Israel could not live in splendid isolation, nor could she afford to forgo the manifold economic benefits that only true peace could bring. Ben-Gurion, on the other hand, was persuaded by Eban's argument that the armistice agreements were perfectly adequate, that by seeming to be in a hurry to get peace Israel would give rise to Arab expectations for concessions on borders, on refugees, or on both, and that it would therefore be better to wait a few years because there would always be opportunities to talk to Arab leaders. In an interview with Kenneth Bilby, the correspondent of the *Herald Tribune*, in July 1949, Ben-Gurion succinctly summed up his position: 'I am prepared to get up in the middle of the night in order to sign a peace agreement—but I am not in a hurry and I can wait ten years. We are under no pressure whatsoever.'

In practical policy terms this position meant that while Israel was interested in peace, she was not prepared to pay a significant price for it. Ben-Gurion's instructions to the Israeli delegation on the eve of the Lausanne conference were to negotiate peace on the basis of the existing armistice demarcation lines. There was no willingness on his part to make or even to consider any significant territorial concessions for the sake of peace. As far as the refugees were concerned the question was not whether to allow them to return before or after the conclusion of a peace settlement but whether to allow them to return at all. By April 1949 the government had formulated a very clear answer; its line was not to allow the return of the refugees.

The Arab leaders, because of weakness and internal instability and because of the serious loss of prestige and legitimacy that accompanied their recent defeat in Palestine, were for the most part either unwilling or unable to conclude a peace settlement with Israel. All the Arab countries were in a state of considerable turmoil, with Syria still in the throes of the military coup staged

by Col. Husni Zaim. Other Arab rulers, to maintain their precarious hold over power, engaged in appeasement of the masses whose hatred of the Zionists and of the Western powers soared to new heights in the wake of military defeat. This internal tension and nervousness in the Arab countries made it difficult for their leaders to pursue a prudent and practical foreign policy or to respond positively to international initiatives designed to pacify and stabilize the region.

Secret talks at Lausanne

During the first phase of the Lausanne conference some face to face meetings did take place between the Israeli and Arab delegates. What was said at these secret meetings is infinitely more interesting and more instructive than the turgid proceedings of the PCC at its formal and separate meetings with the two sides. In fact, one of the few positive results of this singularly futile international conference was the cover it provided for direct contacts between the principal protagonists themselves. Most of the Arab delegates were not averse to direct contact with the representatives of the Zionist state, but they took elaborate precautions, such as meeting outside Lausanne and at night, in order to avoid detection by members of the other delegations and because these trysts made nonsense of their refusal to hold direct negotiations with Israel under the commission's auspices. Elias Sasson initiated and conducted most of these clandestine discussions, though other Israeli officials were also involved. Thanks to their punctilious reporting of every contact to their minister, we have a fairly comprehensive if one-sided record of what transpired at these secret, largely nocturnal meetings.

It was probably no accident but a reflection of the special relationship that the first direct contact that the Israelis made was with the Jordanians. On May 3, Sasson went to Vevey to meet Fawzi el-Mulki, the minister of defence and head of the Jordanian delegation, and Riad al-Mufleh, who had participated in the armistice negotiations at Rhodes and in the work of the Israeli–Jordanian Mixed Armistice Commission in Jerusalem.

When Sasson got in touch with Mulki on the phone, Mulki was perfectly prepared to meet him, but not in Lausanne. They therefore picked on the Hotel Trois Couronnes at Vevey as a likely sounding place and the meeting was duly held. There was nothing of very great interest to report about the content of this conversation, whose importance lay in the fact that it was the first direct contact with an Arab delegation.

Before the end of the month Sasson sent a message to King Abdullah asserting that the Lausanne talks were a complete failure and requesting Jordan to enter into separate talks, parallel to the Lausanne discussions, in Jerusalem. The king was not inclined to accede to this request in view of what had happened when separate talks last took place between Israel and Jordan without the presence of a third party, but he was anxious about the possibility of an Israeli attack on his country if the request were refused. He confided his fears to Sir Alec Kirkbride and to Wells Stabler, the American chargé in Amman. Both the British and the Americans assured him that the Lausanne talks had by no means failed and urged him not to take any action likely to undermine those talks. The British planned to release the munitions held by them at Amman in the event of an Israeli attack on the Arab Legion and a decision was taken against holding separate talks as long as the Lausanne conference was in progress.

Sasson became rather pessimistic about the practical effect of private talks with the Arabs, but Eytan was determined to have a real go at the Arabs himself. He met Mulki by chance one night and sat drinking with him and his two companions for an hour or so. The fastidious Eytan, who had lost none of the airs and graces of an Oxford don during the years he had spent in the Middle East, found Mulki a bit crude in manner but very jolly and was greatly encouraged by Mulki's positive response to his suggestion for a personal meeting.

At their second meeting, on June 22, Eytan outlined to Mulki Israel's tentative proposals for peace. First and most important was the proposal to divide up Palestine between Jordan and Israel only. In other words, Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt would be stuck with the old frontiers. Second, Israel and Jordan would each

recognize the right of the other to keep what they held. Third, Israel might agree to give Gaza to Jordan if the latter could persuade Egypt to cede it. Fourth, Israel would not give up western Galilee nor pay any territorial compensation for it. Fifth, Israel agreed to discuss with Jordan frontier adjustment elsewhere in their mutual interest. Finally, as a gesture in the event of peace being established, Israel would make some contribution towards solving the refugee problem. Mulki said he would cable the king and arranged a further meeting. Though Mulki was noncommittal at this stage, Eytan received the impression that Jordan was anxious to make peace but that she would try to trade area for refugees. In other words, the more land Israel let her have, the fewer refugees she would insist on Israel taking back and vice versa.

Mulki himself was in a truculent mood, fed by the conviction that none of the Arab states could afford to make any further concessions beyond those they had already made in agreeing to the armistice lines without risking the fall of their governments. The Arabs wanted peace, he privately told Mark Ethridge, the American member of the PCC, on a basis they regarded as decent, that is, one that would not overthrow their governments. Jordan's attitude had hardened following the experience in the Triangle and in the Jerusalem area. Mulki felt that by their excessive gun-point demands, the Jews, while pretending to want friendship with Abdullah, had actually lowered his prestige to a point where he could no longer help them in peacemaking. This feeling, said Mulki, was shared by all of Abdullah's advisers and even by the king himself and was responsible for the failure of the Special Committee in Jerusalem and for the king's refusal to approve separate negotiations with the Israelis. Unless the Jews made some concessions by which Jordan could restore some of her prestige, Mulki doubted whether peace could come and he personally was determined not to sign such a peace. 'All the King can do is dismiss me', he exclaimed. 'I will not face the wrath of the people of Transjordan and the Arab world by signing away more than we have already given. The Jews have been too clever.'

Mulki had a series of conversations with Eytan, at the end of

which Eytan felt that the time had come to give his superiors a picture of the situation. Eytan summarized the Jordanian position, as presented to him by Mulki, under eleven heads:

1. Jordan wanted peace and was prepared to make a greater effort than any other state to get it.

2. Jordan found it extremely difficult to make a separate peace. The king's popularity and influence went down to near zero after the armistice agreement and he was not in a position to stick his neck out any further. At the beginning of the year he had been at the height of his popularity internally and of his influence externally and could do what he liked. Now he was branded as a traitor and had to watch his step.

3. Accordingly, Jordan wanted to make peace jointly with all the other Arab states. If, however, the PCC and the rest of the Arabs were to follow a course not leading to an early settlement, and if Israel were willing to help Jordan by offering honourable terms, then Jordan would take the initiative in trying to induce the other Arab states to come to an agreement on the basis of these terms. Should this attempt fail and Jordan remain satisfied that Israel's terms represented a worthwhile offer, then Jordan would be willing to go ahead in common understanding with the people of Palestine.

4. Mulki believed that it was in Israel's interest too to arrive at a settlement with all the Arab states together, and not just with a single one. This, of course, would make things much easier for Jordan.

5. It was the declared policy of Jordan to assimilate to herself (i.e. to annex) the Arab parts of Palestine, and Jordan believed this to be in accordance with the wishes of the Arabs of Palestine. If, however, it became evident that the pursuit of this policy stood in the way of peace, then Jordan would leave the decision to the Arabs of Palestine themselves and not force them in any way. The desire for peace, in other words, transcended the desire for additional territory—'a few mountains more' to use Mulki's phrase.

6. Jordan was ready to settle with Israel on any terms compatible with the UN resolution of 11 December 1948. Jordan

held that refugees and territory were inextricably linked and stood in a direct relationship to one another. The more refugees Israel took, the less territory she would need to give up; the more territory she gave up, the fewer refugees she would need to take.

7. Jordan understood that Israel would be unwilling to take up all the refugees or to give up all the territory she held beyond the November 29 lines; and Jordan would not insist on the complete acceptance by Israel of both these UN resolutions. The king had always been in favour of accepting the November 29 partition plan and he was in favour of doing so still. How many refugees Israel would take and how much territory she would cede was a matter for negotiation bearing in mind the direct relationship between the two matters. A little more here or a little less there would not stand in the way of peace between the two countries.

8. If Jordan, under the terms of a peace agreement with Israel, annexed the Arab part of Palestine, the Anglo-Transjordanian Treaty would not apply west of the Jordan, and the peace agreement could contain a provision to this effect.

9. If everything else was settled, there would be no trouble about reaching a satisfactory understanding on Jerusalem that would take full account of Israel's interests and needs.

10. Jordan conceived of three types of refugee rehabilitation: (*a*) repatriation to Israel; (*b*) repatriation to, or resettlement in, territory to be ceded by Israel; (*c*) resettlement in the Arab countries. If Israel did her share under (*a*) and ceded enough territory to make possible some tangible measure of resettlement under (*b*), then Jordan would be prepared to accept that the Arab states, including herself, had a responsibility under (*c*)—which might, under these circumstances, even amount to the lion's share.

11. As Israel would clearly not take all the refugees, the question arose as to how to select the refugees for repatriation. Would it be according to their place of origin or present whereabouts? Was preference to be given to town-dwellers or to country folk? On these questions Jordan, or at any rate Mulki, had clear-cut notions: preference should be given to property owners.

Eytan's impression was that Mulki would have been perfectly satisfied if nobody except the landowners were repatriated. This led Eytan to observe how true the Arab ruling class was to itself: 'The leopard does not change his spots.' Eytan gave a clear and accurate picture of what was going through the Jordanian mind but it was a foregone conclusion that these expectations, flexible and moderate though they were, could not be reconciled with Israel's twin notions of a territorial settlement and a solution to the refugee problem.

King Abdullah himself seemed to be losing interest in the Palestine problem. He was uninformed about and uninterested in the negotiations at Lausanne. A temporary spell of indifferent health was probably responsible for the 67-year-old monarch's listlessness. Even Greater Syria was seldom mentioned and the only thing that struck any spark in him was the supply of ammunition to the Arab Legion. He complained feverishly to a British diplomat about his government, which he described as 'worse than the Jews', but he lacked the energy either to galvanize it as he used to do or even to change it for another.

The head of the government, Tawfiq Abul Huda, took up the question of the arms embargo with the minister of state at the Foreign Office, Hector McNeil, while on holiday in Britain in July 1949. Abul Huda stated that Jordan's intentions were defensive rather than aggressive, but his country was under the constant threat of aggression from Israel. The fact that his country was seriously short of arms and ammunition, owing to Britain's strict observance of the arms embargo, argued Abul Huda, meant not only that Israeli aggression was much more likely, but that the Israelis could bring much heavier pressure to bear on Jordan in the negotiations on the demarcation of the armistice lines than they would have been able to do if Jordan had been in a position to fight. He said that the Israelis were trying to use this fact as a lever to force Jordan into direct negotiations at which they would impose stiffer terms, but that the Jordanian government continued to hold out for negotiations through the United Nations Conciliation Commission. He added that if the Israelis succeeded in imposing an unfair settlement by using their

military superiority, there would be a resulting lack of balance between Jew and Arab in the Middle East which would lead to a permanent threat to its stability. McNeil could not hold out much hope that the arms embargo would be lifted, and Jordan was consequently left in a weak bargaining position.

Despite this weak bargaining position, or perhaps because of it, Mulki adopted an uncompromisingly nationalistic line at Lausanne and went further than even the Egyptians in his verbal attacks on Israel. Sasson was anxious to meet him privately in order to mollify him and persuade him to mend his ways but Mulki was evasive, saying he needed a few days in order to obtain the king's permission. Sasson thought it would help if Sharett sent the king a message through Dayan, urging him to give his permission. But Sharett did not consider it advisable to make another attempt to get closer to Jordan, especially if it involved another appeal to the king. Every appeal of this kind, said Sharett, placed Israel under some obligation, and 'after we have caused the king so many bitter disappointments, I do not wish to add new ones'.

When Mulki tried to bring the Lausanne talks to an end, however, Sasson could contain himself no longer. The heads of the Egyptian, Syrian, and Lebanese delegations wished to continue the Lausanne talks and urged their governments not to do anything and not to support any decisions by the Political Committee of the Arab League that would jeopardize the talks. Only Mulki dissented from this position and demanded that the Arabs suspend the talks with the Conciliation Commission and take their case to the UN General Assembly due to convene in New York in September. According to Sasson's Lebanese informant, Mulki's insistence on going to the General Assembly was based on the belief that, with the support of America and Britain, the assembly would abandon the idea of an independent state in the Arab parts of Palestine and call for the joining of these parts to Jordan, thereby giving Jordan an official recognition of her conquests in Palestine that would make her less dependent on the favours of Israel or the Arab states. Sasson also learnt that Mulki was to leave Lausanne for London in order to join his king there for the talks with the British government. Sasson therefore sent a

letter to his old friend in London, the Hashemite prince Abdul Majid Haidar, asking him to convey his regards to His Majesty, to point out to him that he was still awaiting Mulki's reply, and to explain the need for direct talks between the parties concerned in order to facilitate the work of the Conciliation Commission. This letter, too, remained unanswered. The Jordanians—king, ministers, and diplomats—were all agreed at this point that there was nothing to be gained from embarking on separate talks with Israel and a great deal to be lost.

One of the reasons for the Israeli policymakers' unwillingness to offer far-reaching concessions in order to entice Jordan into separate talks was the residual feeling that a peace settlement with Egypt ought to come first. Many of Israel's politicians, officials, and military commanders subscribed to what might be termed the 'Egypt first' school of thought, to distinguish it from the 'Jordan first' school. The 'Egypt first' school of thought was based on a number of premisses, all of which required a policy that gave Egypt precedence over Jordan in Israel's quest for a peace settlement. So while the secret talks with the Jordanian representatives were taking place at Lausanne, private talks were also held with the Egyptian representatives to explore the possibility of such a settlement. These talks began very promisingly with a message from King Farouk to Elias Sasson but they ended in total failure.

Domestic political calculations undoubtedly played a part in bringing about the sudden shift in Egypt's attitude against a settlement with Israel, just as they had influenced the earlier change announced in Farouk's message to Sasson. Domestic issues influence the foreign policies of all states and Farouk's Egypt was no exception. Yet it would be a mistake to think that the evolution of Egypt's policy was unaffected by Israel's own behaviour and terms for a settlement. It was to become an often-repeated Israeli charge that the quest for peace was frustrated at Lausanne by Arab intransigence and Arab refusal to recognize Israel's right to exist. What the talks with the Egyptians showed, and in this respect there was no fundamental difference between Egypt and the other Arab states, was that in 1949 most Arab leaders were prepared to recognize Israel's right to exist, they

were willing to meet face to face to negotiate peace, they had their conditions for making peace with Israel, and Israel rejected those conditions because they were incompatible not with her survival as an independent state but with her determination to keep all the territory she held and to resist the repatriation of the refugees. In short, Israel's obstinate defence of the status quo in the key questions of borders and refugees played a major part in barring the way to an accommodation with the Arab states and in dooming the Lausanne conference to ultimate failure.

Israel's Palestinian option

While discussions with the PCC and the official Arab delegations at Lausanne were going round and round in circles, Israel's leaders began to explore the option of creating an independent or semi-independent Palestinian entity west of the Jordan. They wondered whether a smaller Palestinian state on the West Bank might not be preferable to a Greater Transjordan as a neighbour to the east. A larger Arab state on both banks of the Jordan, some of them feared, might at some point come under the control of the Iraqi regime which was deeply hostile to Israel. They did not doubt that Abdullah himself would make an unaggressive neighbour but there was no way of telling how long he would remain on his throne or what would come after him.

Some Palestinian interlocutors came forth, said they preferred association with the Israelis to association with Abdullah, and even asked for Israeli protection and patronage against him. They were led by Muhammad Hawari, an anti-Husayni political figure who now headed the Ramallah Refugee Office and arrived at Lausanne to plead the case of the refugees. Some members of the Husayni faction also turned up uninvited in Lausanne to do the mufti's bidding. So did a third group representing the wealthier refugees who wanted to talk about their lands, their properties, and their frozen bank accounts. This proliferation of groups who claimed to represent the refugees before the PCC reflected the confusion, the disarray, and the bitter rivalries that beset the Palestinian community in the aftermath of the Palestine disaster.

Israel's representatives at Lausanne held discussions with Hawari's group and with the 'propertied refugees'. All the Arab delegations shunned them as collaborators, which in Hawari's case was true. Hawari did not even have enough money of his own to support himself at Lausanne and his hotel and restaurant bills were picked up by Elias Sasson. The two men worked out ambitious plans for an autonomous regime in the Triangle, for a Palestinian government-in-exile that would work with Israel, for an armed rebellion against Jordan, and for the right of asylum in Israel for the rebels. At one point Sharett cabled his agreement 'in principle' to the plan, or 'experiment' as he called it, for a Palestinian government-in-exile, but that was the furthest he ever went. Small wonder then that of all the brave talk of a Palestinian government, of a struggle for independence, of a mini-state or an autonomous region linked to Israel, nothing ever materialized.

Sharett knew that Hawari and the propertied refugees were broken men. He also feared that if Israel conceded the principle of an independent Palestinian state, she would come under strong international pressure to withdraw to the borders of the November 1947 UN partition plan in favour of such a state. But the decisive argument against a Palestinian state was that the Arab Legion was actually in control of the West Bank, the Palestinians had no power to dislodge it, and for Israel to use her own army to do so would have gone beyond the call of duty. Independence is not a gift that one people can make to another. Having, like other Zionist leaders, dedicated his life to the struggle for an independent Jewish state, Sharett was hardly likely to agree to present the Palestinians with an independent state on a silver platter. It was one thing to talk to the Palestinian refugees as a way of putting pressure on Abdullah to accede to Israel's demands, quite another to act as midwife to a Palestinian entity.

In this respect there was no real difference between Sharett and Ben-Gurion. Neither was a true proponent of the Palestinian option in the sense of agreeing to partition the country into separate Palestinian and Jewish states. They gave different

weight to the various considerations against a Palestinian state but they reached the same conclusion. Both considered that the November 1947 borders would not permit their newly born state to live under conditions of tolerable security and both, in the final analysis, preferred co-existence with Jordan based on the 1949 borders. If Sharett was indisposed to help the Palestinians achieve independence, Ben-Gurion was adamantly against doing so. 'We are not contractors for the building of an independent Arab state,' was Ben-Gurion's response to the debate in the Knesset on 4 April 1949 about Israel's Palestinian option. 'We believe this is a matter for the Arabs themselves.' Ben-Gurion of course knew that the Arabs themselves were in no position to build an independent Arab state. The fate of the Palestinian Arabs now lay entirely within the victorious Israelis' gift, and the Israelis would consider only two options: annexation by Jordan or annexation by Israel.

16

The Elusive Peace Treaty

The resumption of direct talks

The failure of the Lausanne conference opened the way to the resumption of direct talks between Israel and the Arab states. Israel publicly declared her readiness to enter into peace negotiations with any of the surrounding Arab countries. Privately, messages were sent to the royal courts in Cairo and Amman, carrying invitations to parley. No response was received from Egypt, and the only positive response to this informal invitation came from King Abdullah. Direct negotiations between Israel and Jordan therefore got under way in November 1949 and continued intermittently until the king's death in July 1951. They proceeded in fits and starts, were beset by endless problems and suffered many setbacks, but they also represented one of the high water marks of Israeli–Jordanian co-operation.

Overlapping interests in the economic, security, and political spheres laid the foundations for the peculiarly intimate co-operation between these two countries and lent some urgency to their mutual quest for a final peace settlement.

Both countries were in the throes of an acute economic crisis as a direct result of the long and exhausting war they had fought. Jordan's sterling balance had been swept away by the costs of war and occupation and by an extremely adverse balance of trade. Her exports to Europe could not go by the traditional route of Haifa's port. Using Beirut meant an additional land haul of 190 kilometres, while using Aqaba involved paying Suez Canal dues. Greater Transjordan, with its largely destitute or impoverished population, was thought to have no economic future unless the frontier with Israel was opened for trade and normal economic relations. Israel, too, needed an open border if she was to have local markets for her goods and save on transport costs. She

depended on Jordan to circumvent the Arab economic boycott, and she depended on Jordanian goodwill for the reactivation of the economic enterprises in the Dead Sea and in Naharayim. With her meagre resources Israel could ill afford to maintain a large standing army and meet the challenge of absorbing mass immigration. Economic development was now a very high priority, and an open border with Jordan would have served as a means to that end.

The security interests of Israel and Jordan were equally vital and closely interdependent. The border between them was long and unnatural, cutting across communities and giving rise to problems of unparalleled scope and complexity. A continuing state of war along this border was likely to absorb the attention, the energies, the manpower, and the scarce financial resources of both sides. A state of peace, on the other hand, would have greatly eased all the problems associated with policing this border and would have freed both societies to concentrate on the more constructive tasks of nation-building and economic development. Yet the interdependence of the two countries in the security sphere was not complete for they also had some divergent interests. The Israelis were reluctant to agree to the annexation of the West Bank by Abdullah because of their ingrained conviction that Jordan was Britain in disguise and that annexation would therefore mean the return of Britain to Palestine by the kitchen door. On the other hand, Jordan was a weaker and less important state than Egypt and therefore offered a better prospect of ultimate Israeli dominance. For Abdullah, by contrast, it was Israel's proven military strength that enhanced her value as a potential ally. An alliance with Israel, while narrowing his diplomatic options, could widen the strategic room for manœuvre he enjoyed *vis-à-vis* his Arab rivals and possibly even permit the realization of his Greater Syria scheme at some future date. On the other hand, if things went badly for Jordan and she herself became the target of military aggression from one of her Arab rivals, then it would have been useful at least to have the option of falling back on the alliance with Israel. In other words, a peace treaty with Israel would have resolved Jordan's immediate

security dilemma as well as insuring the Jordanian branch of the Hashemite dynasty against future threats from its Arab opponents.

Abdullah now had the support of the leading Western powers for his plan to proclaim the annexation of the West Bank and to enter into direct negotiations with Israel. Previously both Britain and America had advised him not to enter into separate negotiations with Israel but to wait and see what might be produced by the Palestine Conciliation Commission. Since the commission produced nothing, they withdrew their objections and conceded the need for direct bilateral negotiations between Israel and the Arabs.

British policy towards Israel underwent a significant change during the summer of 1949, leading to *de jure* recognition and the exchange of ambassadors. There were two major reasons for this. Firstly, the British policymakers recognized that Israel was the strongest military power in the Middle East and concluded that her co-operation would be essential to the success of any scheme for the containment of Soviet advances into this area. Secondly, they discovered that the Anglo-Transjordanian Treaty would apply to the West Bank if this area was to be formally annexed to Jordan and that they themselves would be obliged to come to the rescue of Jordan in the event of an Israeli attack. Yet the mighty British Empire no longer had the troops necessary for intervention in a land war in Palestine, to say nothing of the political will for intervention in such a war. The conclusion was obvious: a Jordanian–Israeli settlement was required in order to reduce to a minimum the likelihood of war. Accordingly British reservations about separate Jordanian–Israeli negotiations gave way to a qualified endorsement. The British did not openly encourage Abdullah to make peace with Israel, but they did not stand in his way either. They approved the idea of direct talks but cautioned Abdullah not to proceed too far or too fast and to take into account the opposition to peace in his own country and in the Arab world. At the same time the British lent their unqualified support to Abdullah's plan to annex the West Bank. The British also persuaded the Americans, following the failure of

third-party mediation, to look favourably on the attempt by Jordan and Israel to engage in bilateral talks and to waive their objection to the annexation of Arab Palestine by Jordan.

A favourable international climate thus existed for the annexation of Arab Palestine and for the initiation of peace talks with Israel. But there was also one major obstacle to progress on both fronts: Arab opposition. In the aftermath of the Palestine defeat, it would have been extremely difficult, if not impossible, to gain public support or the acquiescence of the Arab League to a settlement with Israel. King Abdullah habitually overestimated his own power and underestimated the strength and seriousness of the opposition to his peace policy with Israel. But with the passage of time the king's weakness and isolation became more and more apparent, as did the determination of the political forces that were arraigned against him.

A visit from Abdullah's old acquaintance, Moshe Novomeysky, the founder and director of the Palestine Potash Company, paved the way to the resumption of contact at the official level. Novomeysky had always found the amir of Transjordan friendly and co-operative and, in welcome distinction from other Arab leaders, hostile neither to Jews as people nor to Zionism. Abdullah often told Novomeysky that he had inherited this attitude of friendliness from his father who did not consider respect for Jews to be a derogation from Islam. When Abdullah visited London in August 1949, Novomeysky called on him in the Hyde Park Hotel to ask for his assistance in restoring the fresh water supply to the chemical works at the southern tip of the Dead Sea. Abdullah turned to the possibility of peace between Jordan and Israel, particularly seeking conditions that would satisfy Arab sentiment. He told Novomeysky that if he should wish to see him when back in Palestine, he need only write. In November Novomeysky did write to his royal friend requesting an interview; he received an invitation by return to meet him for dinner at Shuneh.

The talk in the winter palace at Shuneh was a very long one, and it was only in the small hours that Novomeysky returned home. The principal subject of Abdullah's interest was not the construction of a new water canal, but the possibility of real peace and the

conditions on which it might be concluded. Novomeysky suggested that the Israeli authorities would probably agree to the return of some of the Arab quarters in Jerusalem in exchange for Jordanian co-operation in the restoration of water supply to his chemical works. Bearing in mind the lesson of the armistice negotiations, the king replied that he could not agree to piecemeal suggestions of this kind but would assent to a general settlement which would recover sufficient territory to enable him to meet the criticism which a separate peace with Israel would arouse. Novomeysky suggested that Samir Rifai, the minister of the court, who was doing the translation, should meet an Israeli spokesman and discuss the matter as the king's personal representative. The king agreed.

A series of talks were held at Shuneh during the autumn of 1949 between Rifai and Reuven Shiloah of the Israeli Foreign Ministry. Rifai reported the gist of these talks to Kirkbride, who was neither disappointed nor surprised at their lack of concrete results. In his recollections of this period, aptly called *From the Wings*, Kirkbride gives the following gloss on these high-level talks:

> The visitor used to travel down from Jerusalem in a car sent by the King, dine at the royal table with the Prime Minister and then retire with the latter to an ante-chamber for discussions which seemed to be interminable. King Abdullah used to stay up for as long as he could keep his eyes open in the hope that some positive result might emerge. The exchange usually terminated at about three o'clock in the morning after which Shiloah went back across the lines. I marvelled at the amount of time the two participants managed to take up with their discussions.

During the week following Novomeysky's visit, three letters arrived from Israel in rapid succession. One was from Novomeysky himself to Samir Rifai, saying he had delivered the king's message to Ben-Gurion and Sharett and that they were both anxious to discuss a settlement with Jordan. One was from Dr Walter Eytan to King Abdullah, expressing the readiness of the Israeli government to come to a settlement on a friendly basis with Jordan, and stating that Elias Sasson and Reuven Shiloah had been accredited as the representatives of Israel and would present

themselves at the time and place chosen by the king. One was from Sasson to Samir expressing deep satisfaction that there were prospects of permanent peace and the hope that talks should begin as soon as possible. Samir responded by inviting the Israelis to a preliminary talk at Shuneh on Sunday evening, November 27.

The first phase, consisting of exploratory talks, lasted two months, from the end of November 1949 until the end of January 1950. 'This will be a protracted, exhausting and complicated affair', predicted Sharett at the outset. 'One of the serious complications is connected with the indirect but real participation of the British in these negotiations. In general, this is not a matter for a quick fix. *It will require a great deal of time and a great deal of patience.*'

The Israeli government's latitude for making concessions was restricted by various domestic considerations. It was known that the government was reluctant to extend official recognition to the annexation of the West Bank by Jordan and that it did not want to go down in history as the body that officially waived the claim to any part of the Land of Israel. There was also opposition from the left-wing parties, Mapam and the Communists, to negotiations with Jordan because they regarded King Abdullah as a British puppet, and from the nationalist Herut party, which claimed Israeli sovereignty over all of Palestine.

The prime minister appears to have shared both the suspicion felt by the left for Abdullah and his British masters and the unease felt by the right about compromising Israel's claim to the whole area of Mandatory Palestine. But as a pragmatic statesman he recognized that no agreement was possible without some Israeli concessions. On November 26, the day before the first meeting at Shuneh was due to take place, Ben-Gurion gathered his advisers for a consultation. They included Golda Meir, Walter Eytan, Elias Sasson, and Reuven Shiloah, all of whom had first-hand experience of negotiations with the ruler of Jordan. Ben-Gurion posed the question: what did they stand to gain from a peace agreement with Jordan apart from peace? Sasson replied that all the Arab states were afraid to be the first to make peace with Israel and that a peace agreement with Jordan could therefore

open the road to peace with Egypt, Lebanon, and possibly other states as well. Shiloah replied that a peace agreement with Jordan would break the deadlock, split the Arab camp, yield economic advantage, and permit shipping from Eilat. Mrs Meir thought that Abdullah was negotiating on behalf of the British and that great vigilance was therefore called for, especially regarding the Negev. The implications of a peace agreement with Abdullah for the Israeli–Egyptian armistice agreement were also discussed. Ben-Gurion stressed that they must make it clear to Abdullah that they could not spoil their relations with Egypt by agreeing to the replacement of Egyptian control over the Gaza Strip by Jordanian control without first obtaining Egypt's consent. Ben-Gurion was also opposed to a joint port in Eilat but he anticipated that the hardest problem to resolve would be Jerusalem. As far as tactics were concerned, he was in favour of going directly to the point and putting the cards on the table in order to find out whether an agreement was possible or not. The guidelines agreed upon at this meeting consisted of numerous demands and very few concessions. The guidelines were

1. To demand the Jewish Quarter in the Old City right up to the Wailing Wall.
2. A territorial link with Mount Scopus.
3. Latrun.
4. The western bank of the Dead Sea including the north-western corner.
5. The inclusion of Naharayim in Israel and compensation in the south.
6. Mutual border adjustments in other places.
7. Recognition of the annexation of the Gaza Strip after Egypt had given her consent.
8. Free passage to Gaza, but not a corridor.
9. A free area in Haifa and passage to it.
10. A Jordanian undertaking not to allow British bases west of the Jordan.
11. A Jordanian proclamation that the Treaty with Britain would not apply west of the Jordan.

12. Cancellation of the Treaty in the event of a union between Jordan and another country.
13. An agreement on shipping from Eilat.
14. The passage to Gaza and Haifa to be restricted to civilians only, with weapons for the police requiring Israeli approval in each instance.

Five nights at Shuneh

Armed with this detailed brief, Shiloah and Sasson set off for Shuneh on November 27 for the first in a series of exploratory talks. The royal host's face lit up when he saw Sasson, but he was disappointed to learn that this genial Oriental Jew, who had done so much for the cause of Arab–Jewish understanding, was about to desert them to take up his new post as Israel's first minister in Ankara. The king opened the discussion with his by now familiar lecture about having been drawn into the war against his will, about the failure of the Arab world to carry out its duties in war and in peace, and about his intention to save the situation in peacetime just as he had done in wartime. After a quarter of an hour of genial generalities, the king delegated matters to Samir Rifai with his blessings and retired.

Samir described in realistic terms the situation of the two sides. He conceded that Israel had power and the ability to get assistance from the United States, but the challenges facing Israel were enormous and she was surrounded by a hostile Arab world whose hatred was inflamed by its defeat on the battlefield. Despite immigration the Jews would always remain a minority and hence their most vital interest was peace. Notwithstanding all the Arab rhetoric, Jordan recognized Israel as an existing reality and her interest too lay in peace. But to enable His Majesty to make peace, this peace had to be honourable and capable of being presented to the Arab world as an achievement. His Majesty was ready to pursue an independent policy but this policy must not detract from his dignity. On the basis of an honourable peace they were prepared to talk, and Samir proposed a three-point agenda

dealing with political matters, economic matters, and the problems of the refugees.

The Israelis said that the Anglo-Transjordanian Treaty should also be an item on the agenda and asked whether this treaty would extend to Arab Palestine in the event of annexation by Jordan. Samir replied that it would naturally apply to the whole Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, whereupon the Israelis indicated that they might have further to say on this subject later.

Addressing the first item on his agenda, the question of a territorial settlement, Samir distinguished between practical proposals and unrealistic demands such as Jordan's old claim for the restoration of Lydda, Ramle, and Jaffa. Even if it were possible to get the UN to reaffirm its partition plan of November 1947, the Jordanians knew that this plan had no chance of being realized. They did not want to make life hard for geography students and were therefore thinking of more logical arrangements. Here Samir mentioned that Jordan considered access to the Mediterranean at Gaza of vital importance and that they needed a territorial link to it, and that meant the Negev. Samir argued that for Israel the Negev was just a question of prestige, since it was desert land of no economic or settlement value. If Israel thought she had a real need of access to the Red Sea, Jordan would be prepared to grant access to Aqaba in return for free access to Haifa. Moreover, with the exception of Jordan, the entire Arab world was hoping for revenge, and it would be better for Israel not to have a common border with Egypt. The Israeli wedge in the Negev disrupted the territorial continuity of the Arab world from Casablanca to Afghanistan. The removal of this wedge was the kind of achievement with which His Majesty could appear before the Arab world. If agreement could be reached on this vital matter, none of the other problems would be an obstacle to peace, not even Jerusalem. As Novomeysky had been told, the way forward lay not in *ad hoc* solutions to specific problems but in tackling the central question, after which everything would fall into place.

The Israelis explained that for them the Negev was much more

than a question of prestige and that its surrender was out of the question. While they agreed that an outlet to the sea was vital to Jordan, and that Jordan could have Gaza provided Egypt raised no objections, the settlement could not be based on any Israeli territorial concessions in the Negev. Discussion of this question was left to another meeting, but Samir stated frankly that he saw no prospect for a settlement without territorial continuity. He said he could not be indifferent to the terms of the settlement because when the negotiations were completed he would assume power and it would be his responsibility to defend in the Arab world the peace settlement with the Jews.

At about 11 p.m. the king returned to the lounge to check on progress before going to bed. Samir surveyed briefly and accurately the position of the two sides, and Abdullah was relieved to hear that another meeting had been arranged for December 1. As they were standing around the king said that his father had neglected to consolidate his position in the Hijaz and had ended by losing his throne because of his preoccupation with Palestine. He did not wish to repeat his father's mistakes and was determined to put his own affairs in order. As his main enemies he listed first Egypt and then Iraq. He was looking, he said, not towards Arab unity but towards Islamic unity with Pakistan, Hindustan, and Iran. The king then took his leave by kissing Samir and shaking hands with the Israelis.

The same Israeli representatives met Samir Rifai for the second time at Shuneh on December 1. The discussion, which lasted longer than the first one, could not be said to have carried the matter much forward but a number of interesting points emerged.

The visitors started by saying that their superiors had come to the conclusion that it would not be possible for Israel to cede any territory as part of the settlement with Jordan. Samir pointed out that the statement was irreconcilable with their earlier admission of Jordan's right of access to the sea. They replied that there were many precedents which could be found for solving a problem of this kind without territorial surrender. Samir said that if they had in mind free zones, rights of transit, or other such devices, he could say immediately that that was not what he meant by the

term access to the sea. Jordan must have access to the Mediterranean through territory under its own sovereignty. They answered that this was going to be very difficult and repeated their inability to give up territory. Samir said that in that case there did not seem to be any point in continuing the talks as this Jordanian claim was basic to any settlement.

Samir's readiness to stop the talks took the visitors aback and after consultation in Hebrew they asked Samir what scheme he had in mind for reaching the sea. After ascertaining that their claim to the Negev stemmed principally from the need for a reserve of land capable of development, Samir said that what he proposed was partition of the Negev, Israel to take the fertile northern part and Jordan to take the southern part which could not be cultivated in any way. That solution would give Jordan its two principal needs, access to the sea and a common frontier with Egypt. Sasson said that there were other factors to be taken into consideration, one of which was that without this living space expansionist thoughts might creep into Israel's head. A long argument ensued leading to no conclusion about the Negev.

The Israelis then said that they had three other points to raise. With regard to Jerusalem both parties were opposed to internationalization and thought that partition was the best solution. Samir said that he was not ready to tackle this complicated question in detail, but that if Jordan's basic demands were satisfied, he would not anticipate difficulty in reaching agreement over Jerusalem. Shiloah indicated that free access to the Wailing Wall would gratify certain religious elements and secure their support against other groups who were opposed to concessions to Jordan in the south. Samir said he would bear this point in mind.

The second point was that of resuming the operations of the potash works in the Dead Sea and the Palestine Electric Corporation in Naharayim. Samir said that Jordan could not make so valuable a concession except as part of a general settlement. He also referred to the potential value to Israel of the resumption of trade generally in the context of a general settlement.

Thirdly, the visitors brought up the question of the Anglo-Transjordanian Treaty and asked whether it would be possible

for Britain to keep bases only east of the River Jordan. The distances were such as to be of little practical difference in modern war but the question was one of psychology, and it would be much easier for Israel to recognize the union of eastern Palestine with Jordan if there could be some arrangement whereby British bases would not be established on Palestinian territory. Such an arrangement would also help the Israeli government to make concessions to Jordan on other points. Shiloah said that he did not want an answer right away but asked Samir to bear the point in mind. When Samir did not respond, the Israelis remarked that they assumed Jordan's insistence on the Negev to be prompted by British strategical considerations. Samir denied this and, to reinforce this point, offered as an alternative to accept a piece of territory stretching from Hebron through Faluja to Majdal, or from Jenin to Nazareth and Acre in the north.

Samir asked finally that they should obtain from their superiors a clear answer to his question as to how it was possible to reconcile recognition of Jordan's right of access to the sea with refusal to cede territory. The answer would show whether it was any use meeting again. They promised to send a message saying whether they considered further talks likely to be useful. The atmosphere throughout was courteous, in fact almost amicable.

King Abdullah employed his usual tactic of staying in the background, letting his aide do the bidding so that he himself could play the mediator and intervene if the talks got stuck. On this occasion he 'swore by his father's grave and other convincing oaths' that the British had never told him to demand the Negev; that all they had said was to make peace with Israel. He envisaged one or two more preliminary talks to establish a basis for agreement, after which he said he would change the government, make Samir prime minister, and openly start official peace negotiations.

Ben-Gurion consulted his military advisers about the question posed by Samir, and they all preferred giving Jordan access to the sea in the north to access in the south. Gen. Yigael Yadin, the chief of staff, was even prepared to exchange Eilat for a Jordanian-held part of Jerusalem. Ben-Gurion did not agree. He realized

that there could be no Israeli shipping through the Red Sea without Egypt's agreement but he felt that peace with Jordan would improve Israel's prospects of attaining peace with Egypt. In talks with American representatives, Ben-Gurion insisted that Egypt was the key to Israel's relations with the rest of the Arab world, that peace with Egypt would mean peace and stability throughout the Middle East, and emphatically gave priority to peace with Egypt over peace with Jordan. But he had no incentives to offer, not even a face-saving device, to entice Egypt to agree to direct negotiations. On the contrary, he said that Gaza was now wanted by Abdullah and hence could not be a bargaining point between Egypt and Israel.

A third meeting at Shuneh on December 8 between the two Israelis and Samir Rifai was rather stormy. The principal bone of contention continued to be Jordan's demand for access to the Mediterranean. The Israelis offered to give Jordan 'jurisdiction' over a corridor and cited as a precedent the American–Panamanian agreement giving America the right of access to Colon. Samir turned down the offer flatly. The Israelis argued that they could not give Jordan sovereignty over the corridor as this would split their country in half, to which Samir replied that there was no question of splitting the country in half since Jordan desired the southern Negev as well.

The tension was eased by the call to dinner during which an Arab Legion orchestra played in the background. Muhammad Amin Shanqiti, the minister of education, elevated the conversation to a theological plane by asking whether the *Hadith*, the tradition of the Prophet and his Companions, permitted Muslims to eat eggs as well as chickens or only chickens. The king then raised a more contemporary philosophical question: whether the purpose of the UN was to ease the relations between states or whether, to the contrary, it only complicated them. When the meal was over, the visitors returned to the lounge but on hearing the orchestra play the Jordanian national anthem, the diminutive monarch rushed out to salute.

There was an unproductive discussion about the problems of Jerusalem, Naharayim, and the Dead Sea, after which Samir

reverted to his original suggestion that the southern Negev be given to Jordan. This time Shiloah reminded Samir rather pointedly that the whole of the Negev was in their hands while the Gaza Strip was occupied by Egypt; that they were going out of their way to be accommodating; and that if Jordan rejected their offer, they would be more inclined to take the logical course of coming to terms with Egypt. To remove any illusions, he also pointed out that they were happy with the existing situation, that they were in no hurry to make peace, and that negotiations could only proceed on the basis of 'give and take'. Somewhat startled, Samir observed that what Jordan wanted was also peace but it had to be a peace that the king could defend before the Arab world.

At this point the king came in and Samir gave him an accurate survey of the proceedings. Abdullah responded by saying that Shiloah was right, Palestine had been under British rule for thirty years; the Jews had prepared for the struggle prudently, expelled the British, and ended up with more territory than they had expected; the Arabs of Palestine had failed to grasp what was happening and behaved like cowards; the Arab countries had pushed him into war and then run away: the Egyptians and Syrians had been beaten, Lebanon was not worth mentioning, while the despicable Iraqis had sat in Gesher for a couple of days and then returned to Amman to breathe down his neck. There were only two sides that had held their own, that did not tangle with or beat one another, and it was for them to make the peace. He himself was thinking about his children and his visitors' children, but they had to understand his position and help him. What he asked was that Shiloah and Sasson go to their 'wise men'—Weizmann, Ben-Gurion, and Sharett—and urge them to grant his needs so as not to push him into the hands of the Arabs for he was standing at the crossroads, faced with the choice between joining Arab solidarity or shattering it.

The king and Samir had an exchange in Turkish, almost in a whisper, not realizing that Sasson spoke this language as well as Arabic. Abdullah urged Samir to agree to the Israeli proposal because a corridor under Jordanian jurisdiction represented a

concession. What will happen, he asked, when Sasson, who was the only one fighting for them, leaves? Samir said he preferred to wait, and forecast that the Israelis would give in in the end. Abdullah's reply was that currently the Israelis were eager for peace but their eagerness might not last. Samir repeated that they were in a difficult situation, they needed peace and were therefore bound to soften their stand. And if there was no peace, persisted the king, what would he say to Abul Huda, who knew about the contact with the Israelis and had warned against it, and what would he say to the British, the Americans, and the Turks who were all pressing him to settle? Samir ended the exchange by saying that he could not carry through such a settlement and that the king would have to find someone else. It was with obvious reluctance that Samir gave in to the king's demand that a further meeting be arranged.

The breakthrough in the negotiations was achieved in the fourth meeting at Shuneh, which lasted from seven in the evening until three in the morning on December 13. A resolution by the UN General Assembly to place Jerusalem under an international regime spurred both sides to overcome their differences and move forward quickly to partition Jerusalem between themselves before the UN could give effect to its decision. At the meeting Shiloah, Sasson, and Rifai, in the presence of the king, began to draft the written basis for an agreement. Since Samir was wary of the term 'peace treaty', it was called a 'paper' on which were inscribed the 'Principles of a Territorial Settlement'.

The first principle was the partition of Jerusalem, with Jordan giving Israel sovereignty over the Jewish Quarter in the Old City up to the Wailing Wall and secure access to Mount Scopus and Israel conceding to Jordan a stretch of land up to the Bethlehem road. Secondly, Jordan agreed to hand over to Israeli sovereignty the entire western shore of the Dead Sea up to and including the northern potash works. Thirdly, the principle of mutual frontier adjustments was accepted subject to the military and agricultural needs of both sides. Fourthly, and most importantly, in recognition of Jordan's vital need for access to the Mediterranean, Israel was to grant her a corridor from Hebron through Beit Jibrin to

the Gaza coast. This corridor was to be under full Jordanian sovereignty and to form an inseparable part of Jordan's territory, but there were three conditions: Israel would enjoy free crossing at several points; Jordan would maintain no army and erect no military installations; and the Anglo–Transjordanian Treaty would not apply to the corridor.

Other matters discussed were the application of the Anglo–Transjordanian Treaty west of the Jordan River and Israeli access to Naharayim, on both of which agreement was in sight. Abdullah wanted to meet Ben-Gurion in person, and tentative plans were discussed for a royal visit to the Jewish part of the city the following week. Walter Eytan optimistically reported to Moshe Sharett, who was leading the struggle against internationalization at the UN in New York, that it was most likely that the agreement would be initialled before the end of the month.

The document constituted a major breakthrough on two key questions: Jerusalem and access to the sea under Jordanian sovereignty. It did not amount to a peace treaty or even a draft peace treaty but an incomplete set of principles, a rough and ready basis for further negotiations. Detailed provisions on the implementation of these principles had to be worked out, and two sticking points were already apparent: the width and precise location of the corridor and the meaning of the term Gaza. Nevertheless, the log-jam had been broken and the climate in which the talks took place dramatically improved. Shiloah and Sasson added to the drama by presenting the offer of a corridor as evidence of Israel's good faith and adding that it was decided upon by Ben-Gurion in appreciation of the king's conciliatory attitude, and in the face of serious opposition, especially from the military. When Abdullah heard the offer he expressed so much pleasure that it seemed he believed a final agreement was at hand.

Sharett hailed the written document as a 'tremendous achievement'. Though conceding sovereignty over the corridor was an extremely bitter pill to swallow and internally could prove a stumbling block, he assumed it was inescapable and heartily congratulated Shiloah and Sasson on their success.

Moshe Dayan, who was preparing at that time to replace Sasson in the negotiations, stated in his memoirs that he did not know whether the Israeli government would ratify this agreement: 'Ben-Gurion did not reject it, but he wrinkled his nose when he read it.' Ben-Gurion's diary bears no trace of any reservation that he might have had about the agreed principles. What the diary does suggest is that it was the young colonel who wrinkled his nose and, whether deliberately or unwittingly, helped to sabotage the agreement. It was in a consultation with his military advisers on December 15 about the negotiations with Abdullah that Ben-Gurion learnt from Dayan that the Egyptians had given their verbal agreement to a division of no man's land north of Gaza that would give Israel another 10 kilometres along the coast. Although streams ran through this area, making it an important source of water for irrigation, Ben-Gurion was against backing out of the negotiations with Jordan because of the intrinsic importance of an Israeli–Jordanian agreement, because of its importance in opening the road to an agreement with Egypt, and because of the need to stand shoulder to shoulder with Abdullah in the campaign against the internationalization of Jerusalem. It was the military who expressed doubts about Abdullah's claim to the territory adjoining the Bethlehem road and insisted on informing him that his 'new claim' to Israeli territory on the Mediterranean coast was unacceptable.

The guidelines given by Ben-Gurion to Shiloah and Sasson did not augur well for the prospects of success at the fifth meeting at Shuneh on December 23. These guidelines laid all the emphasis on Israel's demands and failed to take adequate account of Jordan's needs. Samir Rifai opened the meeting by asking Shiloah and Sasson what formula had been devised to satisfy Jordan's claim for access to the Mediterranean. Shiloah replied that after much consideration the Israeli government decided that it could not give Jordan a sea front of more than three kilometres just north of the Egyptian–Israeli line and possibly three additional kilometres if the no man's land were to be divided between Egypt and Israel. Jordan would be allowed full sovereignty over a corridor from Hebron to this point on the coast, whose width was to be between

50 and 100 metres. However, should Jordan later obtain the Gaza Strip from Egypt—and Israel was to support Jordan's claim—Jordan would have to return the coastal area obtained from Israel. Shiloah admitted that this point by the sea consisted of rough country covered with sand dunes and that it would be of little economic value, but he thought it would satisfy Jordan's political ambition.

To this proposal Samir replied that access to the sea was important to Jordan purely from the economic standpoint and that the Israeli offer was therefore worthless. He could not think of a corridor in terms of metres but only of kilometres; Jordan had to obtain a substantial amount of territory to justify a peace settlement with Israel to the Arab world, and there was no point in continuing the negotiations if Israel did not recognize the validity of these arguments. At this point King Abdullah injected a conciliatory note, but an ill-considered comment by Sasson stiffened his attitude. In the end it was decided that negotiations should continue, though Samir was of the opinion that the time had come to inform the Jordan government of the progress made so far and let it decide whether an adequate basis existed for the initiation of formal discussions or whether the matter should be dropped. It was also tentatively agreed, at the king's suggestion, that Samir should discuss the situation with Ben-Gurion in Jerusalem.

Only a week after the dramatic breakthrough, the negotiations ran into a major crisis. The sticking point was the width of the proposed corridor: the Jordanians insisted on a few kilometres whereas the Israelis conceded no more than 50 to 100 metres. The construction put on the Jordanians' stand by Sharett was that they wanted a broad belt on which to settle some of the Gaza refugees and cut Israel in two; or that this was a bargaining move from which they would retreat if Israel stood firm; or that this was an attempt to discredit the whole idea of a corridor with a view to forcing Israel back to their original solution based on cession of the southern Negev. Ben-Gurion tended to believe that the last explanation was the right one; he instructed the foreign ministry to inform Abdullah in writing that his conception of a corridor in the Negev was utterly unacceptable, and that if he wanted

to continue the talks he would have to come forward with a new proposal.

Samir Rifai represented this latest Israeli move as an indefinite postponement of the negotiations. He felt that the time had come for him to withdraw and permit the government to continue, if it desired, on an official basis. He counselled the king to be patient and avoid any rash action. Tawfiq Abdul Huda's position was that he would not criticize an agreement with the Israelis provided he himself was not a party to it. That left Samir as the only serious contender for the job of prime minister, and he could only improve his chances by obtaining for the king a satisfactory agreement with Israel. However, he preferred to retain his comfortable post as minister of court which gave him a strong position with the king and enabled him to engage and keep *au courant* of palace intrigue rather than assume the heavy responsibilities of the prime ministership.

As 1949 turned into 1950, the prospects as seen from Tel Aviv of a breakthrough in the talks with Jordan must have looked rather bleak.

A united front on Jerusalem

One chink of light amid the general gloom was the question of Jerusalem, which provided a powerful impetus to Israeli–Jordanian co-operation. Historically, Jerusalem was both a major bone of contention and a major prize in the rivalry between the Hashemites and the Zionist movement. The threat of internationalization looming ever more ominously over the international sky towards the end of 1949 helped to transform this rivalry into one of active collaboration. Differences over boundaries and rights of access were dwarfed by the overriding imperative of resisting the imposition of an international regime over the city. Differences in the quest for a comprehensive political settlement had to be set aside in order to ward off the imminent threat of the UN moving in on them.

Jerusalem was of immense religious, political, and strategic significance to both sides. Whoever ruled Jerusalem was likely to

rule ultimately all of Palestine. For Abdullah, Jerusalem was a coveted prize and the hub of a new empire. He derived great personal satisfaction from being able to worship at the Dome of the Rock where his ancestor, the Prophet, began his journey to heaven and at the Mosque of Omar where his father was buried. Being guardian of the Old City, the third holiest shrine of Islam, also enhanced his stature throughout the Muslim world. And having Jerusalem as his capital would have provided a noble setting for the Hashemite throne in contrast to the shoddy and lack-lustre Amman which was used by the Ottomans to settle Circassians in the nineteenth century and could not even boast of a glorious past. Politically, Abdullah needed to control Jerusalem, the traditional stronghold of the Husaynis, in order to nip in the bud any attempt by the Palestinian nationalists to shake off his rule and form a state of their own under the leadership of the mufti. Strategically, a strongpoint in Jerusalem, such as that provided by the walled city, was as essential for the defence of Jordan's western flank against an Israeli attack as having an unbroken line from Jericho to Jerusalem was to preserving Abdullah's suzerainty over the rest of Arab Palestine.

Israel similarly coveted Jerusalem for its biblical and religious associations. Israel's spiritual heritage and historical greatness were intimately associated with this ancient city. Relinquishing Jerusalem would have therefore struck at the very heart of Israel's national aspirations and unique international mission. From being 'a light unto the nations' it would have been reduced to the level of just another Levantine state along the Mediterranean coast. No less intimately involved with Jerusalem was the security of the Jewish state. Jewish Jerusalem endowed the state with strategic depth, a wedge into Arab Palestine and, with the surrounding hills, an extremely effective bulwark against attack on the coastal plain.

When it became clear that the provisions of the UN resolution of 1947 for turning Jerusalem into a *corpus separatum* were not going to be put into effect, the Palestine Conciliation Commission was asked to prepare a new plan for the internationalization of the city and to present it to the autumn 1949 session of the

General Assembly. The PCC was faced with the fact that the Jewish and Arab parts of Jerusalem were being administered to all intents and purposes as though they were part of Israeli and Jordanian occupied territory respectively. They took account of this situation in the plan which they presented to the assembly. The assembly rejected this compromise plan and on 9 December 1949 voted by a large majority for a resolution which called for treating Jerusalem as a separate entity under UN rule.

The vote in favour of full internationalization was the offspring of an unholy alliance between three international groups: the Soviet bloc, the Vatican and the Catholic countries, especially of Latin America, and the Islamic and Arab states (with the exception of Turkey and Jordan). The Arab states that had rejected the original UN partition resolution lock, stock, and barrel now became enthusiastic proponents of a UN regime for the city. This reversal had as much to do with undercutting Abdullah as it did with depriving the Israelis of their part of the city. Abdullah certainly regarded the move as an assault on his position in Jerusalem by his fellow members of the Arab League and he did not therefore flinch from joining hands with Israel in the fight against internationalization. *In extremis amici.*

Israel, too, received the UN vote with dismay and regarded it as an assault on her position in Jerusalem. Ever since the guns had fallen silent in Jerusalem towards the end of 1948, both Israel and Jordan had been in favour of partition with, at the very most, special international arrangements for the Holy Places. The passing of this resolution spurred on both parties to present the UN with *faits accomplis*. Sharett, who had led Israel's diplomatic campaign against internationalization in New York, took the defeat rather badly and offered Ben-Gurion his resignation, but the prime minister reacted more robustly and persuaded the foreign minister not to resign.

To the UN resolution Ben-Gurion reacted with Churchillian defiance, in deeds as well as words. From the podium of the Knesset he announced the decision to move the government offices from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and no time was lost between the announcement of this decision and its implementation. By

Ben-Gurion's own account this was one of the most difficult and fateful decisions he was ever called upon to make, for it involved not just defiance of the UN but a confrontation with the Catholic, Soviet, and Arab worlds. It was a campaign, he declared in one of his speeches, in which Israel, perhaps for the first time in her history, was pitted against the entire world.

Ben-Gurion saw the imposition of an international regime in Jerusalem in apocalyptic terms. On the one hand it would have placed 100,000 Jews outside the boundaries of the State of Israel, and on the other it would have injected international intrigues and rivalries into the political life of a country that was already polarized between a pro-Soviet and a pro-Western orientation. The growth of Jewish Jerusalem would be arrested if not reversed, and the process could lead to ruin and the first victory of the Arab people against Israel. Moreover, the loss of Jerusalem would only be a beginning. It would be followed by international pressure to take back the refugees and to place other religious places under international supervision; the end result would be loss of independence and anarchy.

These dangers, observed Ben-Gurion in his diary, could only be fended off by making a stand from the very start on the question of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the all-important test case. If Israel defeated the UN resolution, the question of borders would be solved and the pressure to repatriate refugees would cease: 'Our success in Jerusalem solves all the international problems around the state of Israel.' As for the chances of success, Ben-Gurion estimated them to be quite good because Israel had allies, and the attitude of these allies was influenced by her own actions. First and foremost there was Abdullah:

> It is true that he is a prisoner in Britain's hands, but in relation to the other Arab states (whose independence is also dubious) he is a factor, sometimes a decisive one. He destroys Arab unity and can possibly pull behind him our most despicable enemy among the Arab peoples—Iraq. And if Abdullah himself has no weight, there is weight to those who stand behind him—the British. It is an irony of history, but it is a fact, and to a certain extent we must exploit every fact to our advantage: in this dispute with the UN, Britain is our ally, implicitly, without the need to talk to us.

She will stand behind Abdullah and, willy-nilly, behind us . . . There is also the help of Abdullah, and since he sits in Jerusalem, we must not belittle this help, and the talks that are being conducted with him now are of great help.

Ten years later Ben-Gurion was asked why he had thought Israel could get away with acting so defiantly against the wishes of the UN. His reply highlighted the centrality of the alliance with Abdullah to his political strategy:

I knew we had an ally—Transjordan. If they were permitted to hold on to Jerusalem, why weren't we? Transjordan would permit no one to get them out of Jerusalem; consequently no one would dare to remove us. I would have done it without this, but it was a great reinforcement. I knew that nothing bad would happen to us. I was sure that the UN warning was mere words and of no importance.

A letter was sent to King Abdullah in the middle of January 1950 proposing discussions regarding Jerusalem in view of the mandate given to the Trusteeship Council and the possibility of international action to implement the UN resolution. The king responded favourably and asked his minister of court to arrange a meeting. Samir Rifai declined, saying the time had come for the government to consider the matter and, if appropriate, to participate in the discussions on a formal basis. The government debated the matter and chose Defence Minister Fawzi el-Mulki, a veteran of the armistice negotiations and the Lausanne conference, to accompany Samir to the talks with the Israelis. A second phase in the talks between Israel and Jordan thus began at the end of January. Although it revolved round the problems connected with Jerusalem, the Israelis still hoped that it would lead to a comprehensive settlement. In the event it lasted less than a month.

Shiloah and Dayan represented Israel at the meeting in Shuneh on 24 January 1950; the king was absent due to a light attack of flu. The Israelis stated at the outset that their fundamental aim was an overall peace and this aim dictated their specific approach to the Jerusalem problem. They were forced, however, to drop the general issues in favour of a more limited objective—permanent arrangements for the future of Jerusalem. Here, too, an

impasse was reached because the Jordanians demanded the restoration of the Arab quarters in the New City (Talbiya, Katamon, Greek Colony, and Baqa) and offered only limited concessions in return. They asked how far Israel would go in defying the UN and what might their country expect from an agreement. Shiloah replied that Israel would leave the UN before giving up Jerusalem, and Dayan added that they would consider rectification of the present armistice line but only on a 'metre for metre' principle. Samir said that this approach was unacceptable and reverted to the principles of December 13. No progress was made except for an agreement to meet again a week later with maps and detailed proposals.

The next meeting was held on January 30. Khulusi Khayri, a Palestinian from Ramallah and a minister in the government, was included in the Jordanian delegation— a sign of the growth of Palestinian influence in Jordanian politics that accompanied the creeping annexation of the West Bank. The Jordanian delegation wanted to discuss the partition of Jerusalem on the basis of a map proposed by a British chief justice in Palestine, Sir William Fitzgerald, in 1945, but this was dismissed out of hand by the Israelis as an approach that ignored reality and tried to turn the wheel of history back as if the war had not taken place. Only the existing reality, insisted the Israelis, could serve as a starting point for mutual adjustments leading to an effective settlement.

Khulusi Khayri lived up to his reputation as a militant nationalist and an opponent of the king by his uncompromising insistence on the restoration of all the Arab quarters of Jerusalem. Dayan's response was equally crisp and forthright. The king intervened in a vain attempt to move the discussion to the broader questions of a general settlement. He said that Khayri and his people had been responsible for the war and their duty now was to find a way out.

Dayan said that a permanent solution to the problem of Jerusalem could be approached by one of three alternative routes. First, there could be a radical solution involving the exchange of all the Arab quarters in south Jerusalem for a comparable area in the north that would link the New City with Mount Scopus.

Second, there could be financial compensation for the Arab quarters that remained in Israel's possession. Third, there could be minor rectification of the present armistice lines on the basis of 'plot for plot and access for access'. Dayan stressed that whatever the approach, an irreducible condition would be the handing over of the Jewish Quarter and secure access to Mount Scopus. No Israeli government, he explained, could sign a final peace agreement that left the holiest place in the biblical heritage of the Jews under foreign occupation and only a few hundred metres from its border.

The Jordanians ruled out the radical solution because it would have left the strategically important Nablus road in Israeli hands. Mulki showed a paper prepared by unnamed advisers, presumably senior British officers in the Arab Legion, arguing that this road was indispensable not merely for the protection of Jerusalem but for the defence of the entire West Bank. Samir therefore wondered whether Israel would agree to a negotiating formula that would combine the last two approaches. The Israelis did not think so but arranged to return after further consultations with their superiors. Once again, they began their homeward journey at 3 o'clock in the morning.

The next meeting, on February 3, took place in the house of the Israeli commissioner for Jerusalem. The absence of the Palestinian minister was taken to indicate a desire on the part of Samir and Mulki to make progress. Yet they attended the meeting with conflicting instructions. From the king the order was to make no move serving to break off negotiations and make no final commitment without having consulted him. From the government the order was to offer a guarantee of free access to Mount Scopus, the Wailing Wall, and the Jewish Quarter, but no surrender of territory. When Mulki presented this offer, the Israelis ridiculed it as going no further than Article 8 of the armistice agreement and falling short of the rights Israel would enjoy under the Garreau plan that was being considered by the UN Trusteeship Council at the time. Dayan thanked the Jordanian government for its generosity and explained that this would be the end of the talks unless it changed its position. Mulki agreed to consult further with his

government and Samir explored hypothetically the limits of Israeli compensation in the event of the government agreeing to surrender territory.

At the next meeting of the Jordanian Cabinet there was unanimous refusal to concede territory to the Israelis in the Old City. The prime minister and his colleagues seriously considered the Garreau plan as a means of reaching a settlement over Jerusalem without making direct concessions to Israel and told the king that they were ready to resign over this issue. The king pretended to Kirkbride that he had never favoured the admission of the Israelis into the Old City. Having formed a common front to fight internationalization, both sides were now using the threat of internationalization in order to extort better terms. Abul Huda even suspected that Israel was less interested in an agreement with Jordan than in giving the UN the impression that agreement was virtually reached so that active consideration of the Garreau plan might be postponed and the General Assembly's resolution might ultimately be rescinded. This guess was not far off the mark.

In any case, the negotiations for an accord on Jerusalem were no more successful than the earlier talks intended to lead to a comprehensive settlement, and a third stage now began with a more modest aim of concluding a non-aggression pact.

Non-aggression pact

On February 17 Shiloah and Dayan visited, at their request, the king and his minister of court at Shuneh to reopen discussions on a comprehensive agreement. The government was not represented at this meeting but its decision of the previous week cast a long shadow over the proceedings. As Samir explained to the visitors at the outset, the government was in a truculent mood, and even if an agreement could be devised to meet Israel's minimal demands there was no prospect that the present government would ratify it and little prospect of finding a more pliant government to replace it. After the meal, the king again left Samir and his visitors alone to define their irreducible demands and see if the gulf between them could be bridged. Samir stated that a

coastal strip between Majdal and Gaza to serve as a port and a 2-kilometre wide corridor under Jordan sovereignty was a *sine qua non* for a settlement. The Israelis said it was impossible to meet these demands. At this point the king came in for a few minutes, learnt the gist of the discussion, urged the participants to pursue it until they reached either consensus or deadlock, whereupon he would rejoin them and suggest a new idea to get them out of the straits.

The discussion continued for over an hour but the chasm could not be bridged. Around eleven the king reappeared and Samir reported to him that although both sides wanted peace they were unable to overcome the differences separating them.

The king now made his well-timed and dramatic intervention. He opened by saying that although he was greatly distressed at the failure of his efforts to mediate between the two sides he did not despair and he was sure that in the end the two neighbouring peoples would succeed in establishing peaceful relations between themselves. It was apparent that they had not yet overcome the feelings of bitterness and mutual mistrust that were the inevitable consequences of war and bloodshed. In order for the two sides to be able to see things objectively, a transition phase was needed from war to peace. A mere armistice was manifestly inadequate and it was necessary therefore to make temporary arrangements for a period of several years—arrangements that without pretending to be a final solution of all the difficult problems, would foster reconciliation and a better climate between the two sides. Both sides were demanding concessions of one another. In the prevailing atmosphere these concessions could be seen to signify surrender and even treason. But were the atmosphere to change, each nation would view these concessions in a different light. Consequently, the king proposed that instead of signing a final peace agreement, they should sign a non-aggression pact valid for five years.

The Israelis were greatly encouraged by the new proposal and in view of its importance requested it in writing. Since Samir seemed evasive, the king dictated the proposal to Shiloah. The main elements in the proposal were the conclusion of a

non-aggression pact between Israel and Jordan for five years, based on the existing borders as demarcated in the armistice agreement; guarantees to the UN that Israel and Jordan would honour the Holy Places; special compensation to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for their property; negotiations to renew the commercial relations between the two countries and a free zone for Jordan at Haifa; permission to all Arab property owners to return to Israel or send a lawyer to dispose of their property; and the appointment of mixed committees to work out the details of the final settlement.

Finally, the king reserved his right in connection with the territorial modifications and a port on the Mediterranean under Jordanian sovereignty that had been agreed in principle at previous meetings. Most of all, he begged to be told whether the Israeli government could see its way to making any concession on the Arab quarters in Jerusalem so he could decide whether to recommend to his government to yield on the Jewish Quarter in the Old City. Although he did not say so, the king must have wanted desperately to recover some of the Arab quarters, or even just one quarter, in order to be able to demonstrate to the Palestinian Arabs, who constituted two-thirds of the population of his enlarged kingdom, that he had achieved something for them.

The skill and ingenuity with which the king navigated the negotiations out of the straits and thereby saved them from certain shipwreck were remarkable. His analysis of the emotional and psychological impediments that barred the way to a settlement was masterly, as was the gradualist strategy he outlined for overcoming them and effecting the transition from war to peace. The meeting showed how subtle and constructive the king's personal brand of statecraft could be and highlighted some of the qualities that enabled him to excel in negotiations: patience, empathy for the other side, foresight, the ability to keep short-term and long-term goals simultaneously in mind, and the combination of a firm purpose with flexible tactics. It also provided a striking demonstration of the realism and the positive spirit that had been the hallmark of his approach to relations with the Zionist movement over the previous three decades.

The Israelis took heart from the latest turn in the negotiations. On February 22 the Cabinet considered the king's new suggestion for a non-aggression pact. The foreign minister and the prime minister stated that they approved of the proposed draft but pointed out that there were still some problems between Israel and Jordan, like access to Mount Scopus and to the Old City, that would have to be solved in negotiations. Sharett observed that the proposed pact went a stage further than the existing armistice regime between Israel and Jordan and that it had the merit of removing the United Nations as a party to the relations between the two countries. Ben-Gurion listed some of the disadvantages of the pact, like the official waiver of Israel's claim to part of Jerusalem and recognition of Jordan's rule over the West Bank, but he stressed that the proposal constituted a positive change and a precedent for similar agreements with other Arab countries. At the end of the debate the Cabinet decided to approve the draft agreement and to instruct the Israeli representatives to report to the Cabinet on the progress of the negotiations.

Following the Cabinet's decision, Reuven Shiloah and Moshe Dayan met with King Abdullah, Samir Rifai, and Fawzi el-Mulki at Shuneh on February 24. The king stated that he was determined to go through with the agreement and that he would not go back on his word but his ministers seemed unwilling to proceed and expressed various reservations. The post-prandial negotiations lasted three hours, with the king firmly directing the proceedings. He began by suggesting that Shiloah read out the text of his proposal so they could then go through it item by item in order to make his personal text more precise. After the revision and amendment had been completed, Abdullah summoned the mayor of Amman, who had been present at the dinner, and instructed him and Mulki to make fair copies of the 'Draft Agreement between Israel and Jordan', one for each delegation. These copies were duly produced, whereupon the king turned to Samir and Mulki first and Shiloah and Dayan next and told them to initial both copies, adding with a smile: 'You will sign and I shall serve as a witness.' Samir and Mulki looked embarrassed and tried to explain to Abdullah that there was no need for a signature. But he

insisted and, reluctantly, they initialled the agreed set of principles. The king showed much joy and hailed the signature as a turning-point in the negotiations. It was agreed that, after consultation with their respective governments, the two delegations would bring draft agreements based on the written directive to the next meeting at which they would compare them with a view to working out one unified text for the agreement.

Four days later a further meeting took place at Shuneh at which Jordan was represented by Fawzi el-Mulki and Jamal Toukan, a Palestinian Arab who was the administrator of Jerusalem, while Samir attended as 'observer' for the king. Both sides presented draft agreements based on the recently initialled document. The Israeli draft was excessively long and legalistic, with annexes and joint declarations that were rather verbose even by Oriental standards. The draft defined in detail those points that were advantageous to Israel, glossing over the concessions to Jordan in a rather vague manner.

For all its faults, the Israeli draft at least addressed all the points in the agreed document. That much could not be said for the Jordanian draft. The latter 'removed all the meat from the agreed statement'. It substituted 'modification of armistice' for 'non-aggression pact', made no reference to the provision for five years, and omitted any mention of 'freedom of commerce and trade'. On the other hand it emphasized the right to a corridor, an outlet to the sea, a free port at Haifa, and a committee to study these questions.

After the presentation of the two drafts there followed three hours of vigorous argument during which Mulki was the chief Jordanian spokesman while Toukan mostly remained silent. The Israelis made it plain that the Jordanian draft was deficient in many critical respects and that they had no intention of signing a second edition of the armistice agreement, much less an inferior edition of that agreement. They explained that they had already lowered their original expectations of a final peace treaty as a result of the king's persuasive argument concerning the need for a gradual transition from war to peace. The Jordanian draft, it was argued, represented not progress but retrogression in that it

omitted two elements—a five-year non-aggression pact and normal economic relations—that were central to the king's proposal and on the strength of which it was accepted by the Israeli government.

Mulki answered rather lamely that the Jordanian draft was also intended as an interim step towards peace but it was thought preferable not to place a time limit on the renewed commitment not to resort to force. As for the second element, it had to be omitted for fear of breaking the Arab League boycott, but he could give a faithful assurance that the intention was to establish normal economic relations with Israel at the earliest possible moment.

At midnight Shiloah said that there was no point in repeating themselves, and that to prevent misunderstanding he would leave a note for the king explaining the impasse. To this the Jordanians strongly objected and insisted on waking His Majesty. On being woken up from his slumbers, His Majesty, who had not seen the Jordanian draft, flew into a rage, saying he evidently had more influence with the Israelis than he did with his government. This outburst of royal fury had a terrific impact, and his criticism of the Jordanian draft was so forthright that the visitors present felt a bit embarrassed. His plan, he stated, was the result of considerable thought, and he intended to adhere to it. Then he described Jordan's difficulties and the suffering of both countries due to loss of trade. The only alternative to agreement was war, and Jordan was in no position to resume the war. After telling his ministers, in effect, to sign or resign, and to choose between war and peace, the king 'commanded' both parties to come back on Friday. For the first time he laid down that there was no possibility of delay and that the position must be clarified. He appealed to Israel to take account of Jordan's difficulties in revising its draft. Shiloah replied that his was not a bargaining draft but he left himself room for manœuvre by remarking that it was not the Ten Commandments either.

Sir Alec Kirkbride was in favour of continuing the efforts to reach agreement. In his report to the Foreign Office he upheld the Jordanian government's acceptance in principle of a

non-aggression pact as the most important step towards a settlement taken so far and a reversal of the earlier position that they would never conduct peace negotiations with Israel. But when Kirkbride saw Abul Huda after the stormy meeting, the prime minister was 'green with anger' and said he could not accept the Israeli draft and that he saw no point in trying to come to an agreement with tricksters like the Jews. Kirkbride tried to calm him down, saying that all negotiations require time and patience. But Abul Huda submitted his resignation, retracting it only after Samir Rifai had tried and failed to form another Cabinet and the king had promised to hold his horses until after the April elections.

One of the reasons that compelled the king to slow down the pace was the violent propaganda launched against his policy of peace with Israel from the capitals of the Arab world. Col. Abdullah al-Tall, who was implicated in a plot to overthrow King Abdullah and fell out with Glubb Pasha over his demand for rapid promotion, went into political exile in Egypt towards the end of January 1950. Tall now released to the press photostat copies of letters confided to his safe keeping by Abdullah that exposed the secret contacts between the court and the Israelis before and during the armistice negotiations. In interviews to the press, Tall also alleged that British officers in the Arab Legion had prevented their units from fighting, to help the Jews, and denounced Abdullah as a lackey of the British and the Zionists and a traitor to the Arab cause. Outdoing Tall, one Egyptian newspaper claimed to have found secret documents proving that King Abdullah and Glubb Pasha had sold the plans of invasion of the Arab armies to the Zionists. Tall orchestrated a campaign demanding that the Arab League send a court of inquiry to Amman to investigate the treachery of the Jordanian authorities and of the Arab Legion.

Towards the end of February, leaks also began to appear in the press about the talks that were then in progress between Jordan and Israel. The *New York Times* carried on its front page, on March 1, a report that a five-year non-aggression pact had been brought to the Cabinet by Sharett and that the treaty proposals were being studied at the same time by the Jordanian government.

Radio Damascus broadcast that an agreement had been signed by Abdullah and Ben-Gurion on board ship in the Gulf of Aqaba in the presence of representatives from Britain and the United States.

These rumours had the effect of stiffening the resistance of Abul Huda's government to the continuation of the talks with Israel. The opposition centred around the Palestinian members of the Cabinet and was sustained by public opinion on the East Bank as well as the West Bank. Cabinet members may have also been influenced by threats of personal violence if they approved a settlement with Israel. Samir Rifai's failure to form an alternative Cabinet was thus seen as a major setback for the king and a victory for the diehard Palestinian elements both in and out of the Cabinet.

The next meeting took place at Shuneh on March 7. It was the twelfth meeting since direct contact was resumed in November 1949 and it was doomed to be the last in this particular round of talks. Israel was represented by Shiloah and Dayan, who had recently been promoted from colonel to major-general. Jordan was represented by the king, Fawzi el-Mulki, and Said al-Mufti, the minister of interior in Abul Huda's reconstituted Cabinet. The meeting was short. The king, looking solemn, opened by saying that he had hoped that at this meeting they would be able to reap the fruit of their joint labour by concluding an agreement, but to his great regret luck was not on their side. Many obstacles, both internal and external, had been put in his way, forcing him to slow down. This slowing down meant the suspension of the talks rather than a rupture, and it was his duty to stress that this time there were no differences of opinion between himself and his government on the elements of the agreement.

Mulki then read out a *note verbale*, saying that the Jordan government accepted the king's plan as the basis for a settlement. However, owing to rumours and lies circulating in Jordan and since there were elections in progress, it was decided not to press ahead with the negotiations but ask for their adjournment. He concluded with the hope that these negotiations would be resumed at the earliest possible moment and that they would be

'animated by the same spirit and objectives as the conferences to date'.

The suspension of the talks represented a draw in the tug of war between the government and the royal court. The contest was not ended but merely suspended, with neither party enjoying or claiming a clear victory for its policy. The government conceded in principle the need for negotiations and a pact with the enemy, and this decision was formally conveyed to Israel. On the other hand, the court agreed not to force the issue and not to proceed with the implementation of a settlement until after the elections, lest it be said that on the question most crucial to the future of the union—relations with Israel—a definite policy had already been laid down on the eve of the elections. Within this broad question no aspect was more sensitive than that of normalizing economic relations with Israel, for just as for Israel this represented the greatest prize on account of its political and symbolic significance, so for the government party in Jordan, it represented the greatest danger to its position *vis-à-vis* its own people and the rest of the Arab world.

The Israelis experienced disappointment verging on despair—so much attempted and so little achieved. Yet they did not blame the king for the failure of their joint efforts and hoped that he would live to fight another day. Elias Sasson, the architect of the Israeli–Jordanian *rapprochement* and now Israel's minister in Ankara, felt the disappointment more acutely than most. But it was Sharett's analysis of the events of the last few months that was most revealing, for it placed the Israeli–Jordanian negotiations in the much broader context of the relations between the Jewish state and the Arab world as a whole. He had no doubt whatever, as he wrote to Sasson,

> that during the days of crisis that occurred in the negotiations, the Circassian village called Amman served as a focal point for a head-on confrontation between the two trends that operate in the Middle East in relation to our problem—on the one hand the trend for reconciliation with the State of Israel and the drawing of advantage from its existence, and on the other hand the trend of non-recognition of the reality of Israel, the continuation of the boycott of her today, and mental and

practical preparation for renewed war against her tomorrow and the day after tomorrow.

Sharett went on to pay a tribute to the courage and steadfastness of the man who epitomized the first school of thought:

Given the consolidation of the forces that rose against him at home and abroad, I consider that the king held his own, morally and politically, to an extent that deserves respect. He did not surrender, he did not reverse his position, he did not cancel his previous resolutions. On the contrary, he brought Abul Huda's Cabinet to an explicit endorsement of the policy of settlement, and even to an official undertaking to renew the negotiations 'in the same spirit and for the same objectives'. Of course these declarations and undertakings are now suspended in the air, in that their implementation has been postponed to an unspecified date and is contingent on the election results which no one can guess in advance. Nevertheless, the stage we have reached, after the retreat and the delay, must be seen as a positive station on the road to negotiation when compared with our starting point at the beginning.

No doubt King Abdullah would have been flattered by these comments on his own conduct in the face of adversity, just as he would have shared Sharett's judgement that, despite the setbacks, some progress had been made along the long and arduous road to peace between their respective countries. It was a fitting epitaph on a chapter in Israeli–Jordanian negotiations that had begun in November 1949 with the search for a comprehensive settlement, been diverted in search of a specific accord on Jerusalem, was reactivated by Abdullah's proposal of a five-year non-aggression pact in mid-February 1950, and ended inconclusively in early March.

17

Annexation and Negotiation

Tug of war in the Arab League

Following the suspension of the Jordanian–Israeli talks, the crisis in the relations between the Arab League and Jordan reached its climax. The long-standing conflict between the Hashemites and their Arab opponents, and more particularly between Jordan and Egypt, now crystallized round two burning issues: the question of a separate peace with Israel and the annexation of Arab Palestine by Jordan. Discord over these two issues within the Arab League was nothing new, but the crisis in the spring of 1950 was so acute that it threatened, for the first time, the very existence of this five-year-old organization for Arab unity.

King Abdullah did not relax his efforts to bring about an accommodation with Israel. He kept faith with his Israeli partners, showing by deeds as well as words his determination to carry the talks to a successful conclusion. During the lead-up to the elections scheduled to take place on the West Bank and the East Bank on April 11, an energetic campaign was conducted through the pro-Hashemite press and radio in favour of an understanding and a settlement with Israel. The king also rallied political support behind the policy of peace with Israel. But the suspension of the talks represented a serious defeat for the pro-peace party. The political forces opposed to peace with Israel, including the Baath party and the mufti's men, were diverse and badly organized, yet their collective influence was considerable. These opposition groups gained the upper hand in the struggle against the royal party for the hearts and minds of the ruling classes and of the Jordanian and Palestinian masses with the approach of the general elections.

Internal opposition to the king's foreign policy was further incited and deepened by externally directed attacks. Rumours in

early March about his negotiations with the Jews led the other Arab states to exert pressure on him, on his government, and on his representatives in Middle East capitals. A violent campaign was launched to expel Jordan from the Arab League and to impose an economic boycott against her. The Syrian prime minister threatened to close the border with Jordan. The Saudi foreign minister threatened to include Jordan within the wall separating Israel from the Arab world. But the most vociferous and least justified opposition to Abdullah's negotiations with Israel and annexation of the Arab part of Palestine came from Egypt. Recent converts to the cause of Arab nationalism, the Egyptians had sent their army into Palestine less out of sympathy with the Palestinians than out of antipathy towards Abdullah. They sowed the wind and they reaped the whirlwind which they now sought to deflect in Abdullah's direction. They harassed and harried him in public even as they were exploring the possibility of a separate deal with Israel in private. The theme of Abdullah's 'treason' played well in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia, and among disaffected Palestinians wherever they happened to be. A virulent campaign was unleashed in the Egyptian press against Abdullah, hounding him for the loss of Palestine and for his policy of compromise with the Jewish state. At the same time the Egyptian government renewed its support for Hajj Amin al-Husayni. As with the All-Palestine government which they had willed out of nothing, their renewed support was directed less against Israel than it was against Abdullah, this time with the aim of influencing the approaching Jordanian elections.

The Israelis were aware of Cairo's behind-the-scenes activities to discredit Abdullah and block the path of compromise but they kept out of this family quarrel. Ben-Gurion summarized in his diary a report he received from Reuven Shiloah on March 29: 'The League is organizing war against Abdullah. They are organizing gangs in Transjordan. Egypt is strengthening the mufti. They wanted Hawari to help the mufti and he refused. The "king" is in need of money.' Putting the word 'king' in inverted commas betrayed a snide and grudging attitude on the part of the Israeli leader towards an ally who was displaying undeniable

courage in defence of an unpopular policy. Yet Ben-Gurion did not veto, as he easily could have done, Shiloah's suggestion that the state of Israel should extend financial support to the embattled Arab monarch. Consequently, the princely sum of £10,000 was sent to Abdullah through a go-between who could be trusted to keep his lips sealed. There is no reason to think that Abdullah asked for this help. The payment was made on the initiative of the Israeli Arabists without prior discussion, let alone agreement, with him. It was a gesture of solidarity with Abdullah and a timely reminder that he could count on the material support of his Jewish friends in the struggle against the anti-peace forces in the Arab world.

The war of words against Abdullah reached its climax during the twelfth ordinary session of the Arab League Council in Cairo, which lasted from March 25 to April 13. In this session Jordan was placed in the dock and two main charges were pressed against her: annexation of Arab Palestine without the consent of the League and breaking the Arab front by negotiating separately with Israel. The second charge was underscored by the resolution of the Council, passed unanimously on April 1, that no member of the Arab League may negotiate a separate peace treaty with Israel or any military, political, or economic agreement, and any state that did so would be considered to have forfeited her membership.

Some mystification was caused by the Jordanian vote in favour of this resolution since it was known that negotiations had been going on between Jordan and Israel which seemed to promise accord between the two countries. King Abdullah's *volte-face* was probably due to the fact that elections in his country were due to take place in ten days' time, when he also planned to announce the incorporation into Jordan of Arab Palestine. It was therefore scarcely the moment to exacerbate Arab feelings and to provoke an open rupture with the League. Defiance on both charges would have provoked such a rupture, leading to Jordan's expulsion from the League. Abdullah apparently yielded on negotiations with Israel, the better to make his stand on annexation.

In retrospect, some Israelis considered that the compromise

reached between Abdullah and the League was at their expense. Yaacov Shimoni, one of the Foreign Ministry's most perceptive Arab experts, was not surprised by Abdullah's *volte-face*; on the contrary, he thought that this diplomatic puzzle can be explained very simply:

> Abdullah did a trade-off which was unfortunate for us but legitimate from the point of view of the dirty game called international politics. The Arabs threatened him with expulsion from the League because he was making the final preparations for annexation and because they heard that he was going to sign a peace agreement with Israel. He said to them: 'let us do a deal—I shall forgo a peace treaty with Israel if you accept my annexation. I shall also present the annexation in a way that would make it easier for you to live with by saying that it is only a temporary measure until a permanent solution is found to the Palestine problem.' In other words, he sold the idea of a peace agreement with Israel in exchange for an Arab acceptance of his annexation of the West Bank. He calculated, he weighed the pros and cons and found that the second thing was more useful to him than the first.

This solution to the diplomatic puzzle is generally convincing, but it is unduly harsh in implying that Abdullah abandoned the idea of peace with Israel altogether. A more likely explanation is that Abdullah intended to wait until after the elections were over and Greater Jordan had become a fact before resuming the quest for a peace treaty with Israel, even if it meant the expulsion of Jordan from the Arab League. To all his allies—American, Israeli, and Iraqi—Abdullah gave this same explanation for the Jordanian representative's surprising vote in favour of the League's resolution. If Abdullah was double-crossing anyone, it was not the Israelis but his rivals in the Arab League.

The union

To complete the annexation of Arab Palestine was now Jordan's most urgent task. On April 11 general elections were held for the new Parliament to represent both banks of the kingdom. The electorate was more than doubled by giving all the Palestinians, including the refugees, the right to vote, and the number of seats

in the Chamber of Deputies was increased from 20 to 40 to make room for 20 Palestinians. One hundred and twenty candidates stood for election on a personal, non-party programme. Of the 20 East Bank deputies, 7 were elected unopposed, whereas on the West Bank all the seats were contested, reflecting a higher level of political consciousness. The mood of the Palestinians emerged clearly enough during the campaign and was faithfully reflected in the new Chamber of Deputies: union with Transjordan was acceptable, peace with Israel was not.

Said al-Mufti was asked to form and hold the balance in a new Cabinet consisting of five Transjordanians and five Palestinians. For the task of holding the balance he was well equipped both by virtue of being the leader of the Circassian community and of being fearless and independent. Muhammad Shureiki became foreign minister, Fawzi el-Mulki remained as defence minister, and Falah Madadha as minister of the interior. Thus despite the pretence at equal representation, all the key portfolios in the new Cabinet were given to East Bankers.

While the elections were taking place in Jordan, the Arab League continued its deliberations in Cairo. On April 13 the Council confirmed its earlier resolution to expel any members that reached a separate agreement with Israel. With Jordan abstaining, the Council also reaffirmed its resolution of 12 April 1948 which provided that the entry of the Arab armies into Palestine for the purpose of saving it should be viewed as a temporary measure free of any characteristics of occupation or partition of Palestine, and that following its liberation it should be handed to its owners so that they might rule it as they pleased. Satisfied that they had Abdullah on the run as far as negotiations with Israel were concerned, the Arab League leaders in an unusual display of collective restraint, decided not to press him too hard, at least for the time being, on the question of annexation. With Iraq acting as the mediator, a compromise formula was reached to recognize Jordan's *de facto* administration but to refuse *de jure* recognition to her annexation of Arab Palestine.

Abdullah renewed the secret contact with Israel despite the

threat of expulsion from the Arab League. On April 21 he sent Abdel Ghani al-Karmi to meet Moshe Sasson in the latter's house in Jerusalem. Moshe Sasson was a young Arabist in the Israeli Foreign Ministry and the son of Elias Sasson. Sasson junior explained to Karmi the Israeli attitude to the annexation of the West Bank and then read out to him the text of a statement issued by the Israeli government to its representatives abroad:

> This is a unilateral act which in no way binds Israel. We are bound to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan by the armistice agreement and it is our firm intention to abide strictly by it. But this agreement does not empower the Government of Jordan to do what it has done. This agreement does not contain a final political settlement and no final settlement is possible without negotiations and the conclusion of peace between the two sides. It must be clear therefore that the Government of Israel does not recognize the annexation and the status of the Arab areas west of the Jordan remains an open question as far as Israel is concerned.

After reading the text, Moshe Sasson asked his visitor to inform King Abdullah that the Israeli government would be ready to review her attitude to the annexation if an agreement was signed between her and Jordan. Sasson added that at his next meeting with the king, Reuven Shiloah would amplify and clarify Israel's official position.

On April 24 the new Parliament convened for the first time for the avowed purpose of confirming the union between Jordan and Arab Palestine. In a skilful speech from the throne, Abdullah defended the union and repudiated the accusations of the Arab League: 'My Government considers that the resolution of the Arab League Political Committee, passed on 12 April 1948, no longer stands valid as the Arab states have agreed to the permanent armistice and have followed this with the acceptance of the partition resolution of the United Nations Organization, in contravention of the aforementioned resolution of the Political Committee.' As a sop to his critics and in order to place himself on the right side of the Arab League's resolution of 13 April 1950, Abdullah added that the union would not prejudice the final settlement which would establish Arab rights in Palestine but, on the

contrary, would serve to 'strengthen the defence of a united people and its just cause'.

The same day both houses of Parliament, the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, in a joint session, affirmed their support for 'complete unity between the two sides of the Jordan and their union into one state, which is the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, at whose head reigns King Abdullah Ibn El Hussein, on a basis of constitutional representative government and equality of the rights and duties of all citizens.'

That Abdullah did not plan to renege on his promises to Israel once Greater Jordan had materialized is evident from the fact that only two days after the historic session at which the Parliament passed the Decree of Unification, he received Reuven Shiloah and Moshe Dayan in Amman without even waiting for the storm to subside. Elaborate precautions were taken to prevent the new government from finding out about this meeting which was held in the house of the king's confidant, Muhammad al-Zubati. The king was cheerful and optimistic. He was confident that his people would support peace with Israel and that his present government was stronger than the last one and would co-operate in executing his policy. The king reaffirmed his loyalty to the previously agreed statement of principles. A reference to compensation for the refugees was the only sign Shiloah could discern that the king might increase his demands. What Abdullah said was that he did not want a single refugee to return to Israel; he wanted them all to stay but he wanted Israel to offer compensation to the refugees who opted not to return. Nor was Abdullah afraid of actions by the Arab League, and if sanctions were imposed on Jordan he would leave the League. His hope was that if sanctions were imposed, Israel would extend aid to him. For his part Abdullah promised to take all possible steps to ensure that an agreement was reached in the near future, with the negotiators sitting continuously for several days to iron out all the difficulties and to complete a paper which would then be submitted to the PCC.

What Abdullah seriously misjudged was the strength of the internal opposition to his peace policy and the effect which the

storm in the Arab League had on the readiness of his ministers to carry out this policy. He only took Kirkbride into his confidence several days later, to ask him to inform Said al-Mufti and find out whether he would agree to the resumption of talks. In effect, Abdullah was asking the British minister to serve as a mediator between himself and the Jordanian government. The prime minister replied that all the members of his Cabinet would be opposed and asked Kirkbride to prevail on the king not to press for the resumption of the talks. Kirkbride was reluctant to assume responsibility for the postponement of the talks though he estimated that no more than five or six members of Parliament would support peace negotiations at that time and that the Cabinet would resign if the king forced its hand.

Although the Foreign Office consistently backed Abdullah's plan to annex Arab Palestine and although it did not rate the Arab League very highly, it saw no reason to provoke another storm in the immediate aftermath of the union. It was also thought that official British recognition of the union would strengthen Jordan's position *vis-à-vis* the Arab League and in any eventual peace negotiations with Israel. Accordingly, on April 27, the minister of state at the Foreign Office, Kenneth Younger, announced in the House of Commons that the British government accorded formal recognition to the union and declared that the Anglo–Transjordanian Treaty of 1948 would apply to all the territory included in the union, with the exception of Jerusalem. Simultaneously, the British government accorded *de jure* recognition to the State of Israel and announced that it had no intention of requesting the establishment of military bases in the area of Palestine now united to the Kingdom of Jordan. Israeli protest about the extension of the treaty to the West Bank was met with the reply that *de jure* recognition was accorded to the union and to Israel simultaneously in the hope of creating the most favourable conditions for reaching a final settlement between Israel and Jordan. The only other country to recognize the union, apart from Britain, was Pakistan.

British hopes that recognition of the union and Israel would help to promote a Jordanian–Israeli agreement were quickly

dispelled. No progress was made in the summer of 1950 despite all the efforts of King Abdullah and Reuven Shiloah, who staked his personal reputation on being able to bring about a settlement with Jordan. Abdullah was in a quandary. The Council of Ministers ignored his hints about the desirability of getting an understanding with Israel and he suspected that the majority in Parliament were with the ministers in this matter. On the other hand he wanted to keep the Israelis tagging along until circumstances changed. He continued therefore to stage these meetings and to urge complete secrecy on all and sundry. So long as he did not ask the ministers to participate, they did not object to these contacts.

On June 6 Abdullah met Reuven Shiloah in the house of Abdel Ghani al-Karmi in east Jerusalem. Great care was taken to keep the meeting secret but the ministers got to hear about it. Abdullah's version of the meeting was that he tried to ascertain what further concessions the Israelis would be prepared to make and that they kept referring him back to the principles they had agreed in February while making vague hints about possible adjustments in favour of Jordan. He also announced his intention to appoint a new delegation to the Special Committee and to charge it with working out various proposals which could then be presented to the Palestine Conciliation Commission.

Despite the king's unflinching commitment, the prospects for a peace settlement between Jordan and Israel gradually receded during the summer of 1950. Many politicians, including some of the king's supporters, came round to the conclusion that for Jordan co-operation with the Arab world was more feasible and more desirable than a settlement with Israel. There was renewed talk of a second round against Israel and growing support for the view that the Arab world, Jordan included, ought to use the coming years to forge greater unity and military strength for the eventual confrontation with the Jewish state.

Diplomatic deadlock and military escalation

Israel herself bore a share of the responsibility for the progressive deterioration in the relations between herself and Jordan that was

to culminate in an armed clash in the last month of 1950. Public opinion was not well disposed towards Jordan, seeing it as a British protectorate and King Abdullah as a British puppet. Support for a compromise with Jordan involving Israeli concessions would have therefore been difficult to mobilize even if the will had been there. The opposition parties, on the other hand, found it quite easy to stir up public opinion against the Jordanian annexation of the West Bank.

The Knesset held a special debate on May 3 at which the opposition parties of the left and the right, for different ideological reasons, denounced the annexation and repudiated Jordan's claim to any territory west of the Jordan. The Communists and the left-wing Mapam opposed the extension of British influence and the alienation of Russia. They demanded that a protest be submitted to the Security Council. The right-wing parties, Herut and the General Zionists, claimed that the Jewish people had a historic right to all of Palestine. Herut's leader, Menachem Begin, proclaimed that the severance of the historic homeland would not be recognized by a future Israeli government. Nathan Yellin-More, a former leader of the Stern Gang, called for sending the army to fight the British and Abdullah. Ben-Gurion was so appalled by the ignorance and irresponsibility of the speakers that he declined to participate in the debate.

Within the government there was a general consensus in favour of a peace settlement with Jordan based on the 1949 armistice lines. Inability to attain peace on this basis, however, left the Israeli leaders with a feeling of frustration. They had hoped that the elections to the Jordanian Parliament would give the king general support for his peace policy. The reality was that Abdullah stood alone and lacked the power to push forward his policy of peace with Israel. In the annexation of the West Bank the British and his ministers were with him; in relation to Israel he remained in splendid isolation. Those in Israel who thought that the union of Arab Palestine and Jordan would embitter relations with Israel began to raise their heads again. Diplomatic deadlock bred frustration, and frustration manifested itself in a more belligerent mood, in the surfacing of expansionist ideas, and in

growing pressure from the military for direct action. In 1950, unable to protect every kilometre of the armistice lines, the IDF adopted a more active strategy of retaliation. Reprisal raids first against villages and later against Arab police stations and army units were seen as the only means of deterring Arab governments from allowing or encouraging incursions into Israeli territory.

The armistice lines in central Palestine—long, winding, passing through inhabited areas, and with large concentrations of refugees near them—were the most difficult to guard. Many of the infiltrators across this line, which was not marked on the ground, were of an innocent kind: civilians who wanted to return to their homes or look for a lost member of their family, or retrieve money and belongings they had left behind, or harvest their crops and pick the fruit from their orchards. Only a minority were real predators who crossed the border to smuggle, to rob, and to kill the usurpers.

The Israeli public was full of righteous indignation and quite oblivious to the fact that most of the infiltrators were refugees who had been brutally driven out of their homes and now wanted to rebuild their shattered lives. The Israeli government, yielding to pressure from the public and the military, inaugurated the policy of direct reprisals. Wrongly it assumed, or at least it claimed, that the Jordanian authorities condoned and even encouraged these clandestine border crossings. In fact the Jordanian authorities did their best to discourage infiltration and curb border incidents. They did this not out of love for the Israelis but because they could not afford the risk of the resumption of war and because they could not count on any help from their Arab allies. Moreover, they suspected that their worst enemies, the mufti, Egypt, Syria, and Ibn Saud, encouraged infiltration in the hope of embroiling Jordan with Israel.

Unrest along the border encouraged Israeli expansionism. This was particularly true of Moshe Dayan, now a major-general and commander of the southern front. Dayan became acutely dissatisfied not only with the situation along Israel's armistice lines but with the armistice lines themselves, especially the one with Jordan that he himself had helped to negotiate. In the

General Staff Dayan emerged as a leading hawk and an advocate of the policy of hard-hitting military reprisals. He also developed the theory that the War of Independence was not yet over and that several further large-scale operations were required to bring it to a more favourable conclusion. Various proposals were floated by Dayan for the capture of the Gaza Strip, Mount Hebron, and the West Bank, all designed to stem the tide of infiltration, to round off Israel's borders, and to assert her military dominance in such a crushing manner that the Arabs would give up any hope of a second round. Instead of Israel being threatened with a second round, Dayan wanted Israel to threaten the Arabs and to constantly escalate the level of violence so as to demonstrate her superiority and to create the conditions for territorial expansion.

Giving the IDF control over armistice affairs placed great strain on Israel's relations with Jordan because Dayan and some of his fellow officers were so heavy-handed and uncooperative. Rejection of some constructive Jordanian proposals for checking infiltration exacerbated these relations. Glubb Pasha was of the opinion that border incidents arising out of infiltration should be handled by the local police on both sides rather than by the military. He noted that in the Jenin and Tulkarem areas, where the police controlled the border, incidents rarely arose, so in June 1950 he offered to extend this system to the south. But the Israelis refused.

King Abdullah shared the views of his chief of staff. He once asked the Israelis to withdraw their army from the frontier and to replace it with a national guard. He pointed out that the border area was populated by civilians, and when they crossed the border, for whatever reason, the army opened fire; a national guard, he said, was better suited to maintain law and order. Dayan's response was that no one had the right to tell Israel how to protect her own border.

As the chances of some sort of agreement with Jordan faded away, the Israeli policy on the common frontier became more aggressive and often provocative. Israel turned to a policy of exacting every advantage in dealing with the Jordanian authorities unless the latter showed themselves more willing to

co-operate. It was widely suspected that this stiffer policy was a form of pressure calculated to force Jordan to agree to Israel's terms for a settlement. Dayan said as much to an officer at the UN Secretariat in Jerusalem. Reuven Shiloah also admitted that in the absence of the restraining influence of peace negotiations he could no longer successfully urge on his colleagues leniency in border matters, hence the tightening of controls and 'possible occasional violations of correct procedure'. Officers in UNTSO were shocked by Israel's conduct, though Gen. Riley, the American officer who headed it, was extremely careful not to criticize or antagonize the Israelis. Col. de Ridder, Riley's Belgian deputy, was more outspoken. He once told the Israeli delegate to the MAC that 'The Jordanians cause trouble through ignorance, but you Israelis are dishonest and do it deliberately', and spoke in a similar vein to the Israeli government.

A major flare-up occurred at the end of August when Israeli troops crossed the River Jordan to cultivate a plot at Naharayim, near the confluence of the Yarmouk River, which on the Rhodes map was shown on the Israeli side of the armistice line. The reaction in Jordan was violent, and a resort to force to expel the intruders was only avoided with difficulty. King Abdullah had indeed surrendered this area during the secret talks with the Israelis at Shuneh at the time of the Rhodes negotiations but he did not feel confident enough to own up publicly to the secret stipulations. The Israelis, knowing that they were technically in the right, offered to discuss the matter in the MAC but the Jordanian foreign minister, Muhammad Shureiki, submitted a complaint to the Security Council, accusing Israel of military aggression and of forging the Rhodes map in order to cover up their aggression. When the Security Council rejected the complaint, Shureiki turned to Baghdad for military assistance to repel the aggression and appealed to the United States, Britain, and France for action against the aggressors. The Western powers counselled moderation and in the end Jordan withdrew the complaint from the Security Council and retracted the charge about the forgery of the map.

Israel's special relations with Abdullah were of little value in

handling this particular crisis. On the contrary, viewing these relations as the private affair of the king made the ministers more extreme and more ready to co-operate with the Arab League. It was a vicious circle. As the king became less useful to the Israelis, they offered him fewer inducements for a settlement, and in the absence of a generous peace offer from Israel, his authority at home was further undermined.

Towards the end of 1950 another major crisis erupted, culminating in an armed clash between the Arab Legion and the IDF. The Jordanian government discovered that the road built through Wadi Araba a year previously by the Israelis passed for a short distance through Jordanian territory, and at the end of November an Arab Legion detachment was sent to block the road. This action was taken without the king being consulted or even informed beforehand.

The Israelis took a very grave view of this incident, and a decision was reached by the Cabinet to instruct the IDF to take action to remove the Jordanian roadblock at kilometre 78 of the road to Eilat. The Israeli force that was sent to kilometre 78 under the command of Major-General Dayan failed to dislodge the Arab Legion detachment, in spite of superiority in numbers and armaments. An exchange of fire took place on December 3 but there were no casualties. After the skirmish, the Arab Legion obeyed the order of the United Nations observers to fall back and permit the resumption of traffic along the road. The Israelis not only declined to accept UN orders but flagrantly patrolled the bypass with the apparent object of provoking the Legion forces to open fire. An inquiry by the Mixed Armistice Commission revealed that the road did pass through Jordanian territory, and in March 1951 this stretch of the road, from kilometre 74 to kilometre 78, was handed over to Jordan after the completion of a parallel road on the Israeli side of the border.

The Wadi Araba incident finally brought about the resignation of Said al-Mufti and the appointment of a new government headed by Samir Rifai. On taking office, Rifai stated in Parliament and in public that he was not prepared to conclude a peace with Israel independently of the other Arab states. In private he

added that he would nevertheless be prepared to do all he could, within the scope of the Rhodes agreement, to remove the causes of friction.

The Wadi Araba incident cast a long shadow over the relations between Israel and the king. Abdullah had reached the end of his patience with the Israelis and the former goodwill was no longer manifest. To the American minister in Amman he complained that every time he was close to a settlement, the Israelis spoilt everything by some act of aggression. He was very bitter about an Israeli plane circling his palace on December 3 which he considered a personal insult. He indicated his awareness of the Anglo-American interest in peace between the two countries and reiterated his devotion to that objective, but went so far as to threaten, if Israeli aggression continued, to revert to the tactics he learnt during the Arab Revolt and organize sabotage and terrorism within Israel. This threat was not taken seriously but it showed that at least for the time being the Israelis had lost their one sincere friend in the whole Arab world.

Thus, as 1950 drew to a close, the policymakers in Britain, Jordan, and Israel were forced to recognize that the prospects of a peaceful settlement had all but vanished. Progress made in the earlier part of the year had not just been arrested, actual deterioration had set in. The whole trend towards a settlement had been reversed. Diplomatic deadlock led to military escalation, and military escalation further undercut the efforts to reach a peaceful settlement.

18

Violent Finale

The economic approach to peace

The year 1951 was ill-starred for Jordan. It was marked by political turmoil, acute economic crisis, continuing isolation within the Arab world, and persistent tensions on the border with Israel, with occasional outcroppings of violence. Most unsettling of all was the internal struggle for power and the Palestinian challenge to the king's authority. The king got his larger realm but he ruled an unwieldy enterprise in which Palestinians, both refugees and West Bankers, outnumbered the East Bankers by a ratio of two to one—900,000 Palestinians to 450,000 Transjordanians. Abdullah's new subjects offered him their tokens of obedience but owed him no love or loyalty. He himself was anxious to have the new status quo ratified, to avoid a full-scale confrontation with Israel, but an overall settlement with Israel was beyond his power. Everywhere there was a thirst for revenge and little support was forthcoming for his policy of accommodation with the victorious Jewish state.

Economically the state of the country deteriorated further, making it less viable rather than more viable than it had been before the union. Ravaged by war, cut off from its natural markets, flooded with refugees, and wracked by unemployment, the West Bank faced especially severe problems. Economic pressure rekindled King Abdullah's interest in normalizing relations with Israel. A settlement with Israel, he hoped, would open up a large market for his kingdom's agricultural produce, provide capital in the form of compensation for the refugees, help to improve general economic conditions, and create new possibilities of development assistance from the United Nations and the United States.

Some of the more imaginative Israeli officials recognized that

assistance towards the economic development of Jordan held out the best hope for the future. But the mood in Israel was not conducive to unilateral concessions or gestures of conciliation. The tendency in blockaded Israel was to ignore the existence of the Arab world except as something menacing and encircling. Although the orthodox approach had been tried for two years without success there was resistance to the idea of using economic incentives to oil the wheels of diplomacy.

The saga of the negotiations with Jordan was common knowledge in political circles but there was amazing indifference, or perhaps it was a consensus, in relation to the conduct of these negotiations. The public debate in Israel in the early 1950s revolved round global issues like the Cold War and the Korean War and not round relations with the Arab world. Consequently, the official Israeli stand in the negotiations with Jordan remained unimaginative and short-sighted, refusing to make any concessions unless there was an immediate corresponding gain. All the constructive ideas came not from the top but from the officials directly involved in the conduct of relations with Jordan.

Foremost among these was Reuven Shiloah. Initially, there was tremendous enthusiasm at the Foreign Ministry for a settlement with Abdullah but with the growing scepticism, and especially after Elias Sasson took up his post in Ankara, maintaining the contact with Abdullah came to be seen as Shiloah's private affair. Because Shiloah's Arabic was somewhat less than perfect and because of the importance that Abdullah was known to attach to the personal element in diplomacy, Sharett appointed Moshe Sasson, the son of Elias Sasson, as an assistant to Shiloah for the last phase of the negotiations. There was thus an element of continuity on the Israeli side.

Moshe Sasson accompanied Shiloah to the last four or five meetings with Abdullah and wrote a report on each of them and about the frequent meetings he had with Abdel Ghani al-Karmi, code-named by the Israelis 'Hayogev', who now served as Abdullah's principal emissary. In all the meetings with Abdullah, whether they were discussing Israel, Jordan, the Palestinians, or the British, one royal quality always stood out—pragmatism. It

was this quality that Abdullah now determinedly tried to apply to the resolution of the Arab–Israeli conflict. He sought to make peace with Israel as a result of a cold and sober calculation of the Jordanian national interest.

Because of the family connection, Moshe Sasson enjoyed greater freedom than a junior diplomat would normally allow himself in the presence of a monarch. Once, standing on the stairs of Abdullah's palace in Amman, Sasson said he wanted to ask two questions which were difficult and possibly discourteous. 'Ask, my son', said Abdullah in a friendly, paternal voice. 'Why do you want peace with Israel?' asked Sasson. Without a moment's hesitation Abdullah replied: 'I want peace not because I have become a Zionist or care for Israel's welfare, but because it is in the interest of my people. I am convinced that if we do not make peace with you, there will be another war, and another war, and another war, and another war, and we would lose. Hence it is the supreme interest of the Arab nation to make peace with you.'

The young Israeli was sufficiently impressed with this answer to forgo his second question but Abdullah gently encouraged him by clasping his hand and stroking it until he posed his second question: 'If you want peace for the sake of your people, why do you run ahead of the people? Why don't you wait for the Palestinians to come to you and ask you to make peace so that you will be seen to be acting in response to their wishes and public appeals?' Abdullah gave a benign smile but no answer. It was left to Samir Rifai to take the novice to a corner and explain that as an absolute ruler, King Abdullah saw it as his duty to decide what was best for his people without having to ask for their opinion or to receive their support for what he considered to be the right policy.

Encouraged by these replies to his questions, Moshe Sasson concluded that Jordan remained the Arab country most likely to be first to conclude a peace agreement with Israel. This assumption was widely held in the Foreign Ministry despite the recent setbacks. Reuven Shiloah was of the opinion that with Samir Rifai in power, a new opportunity presented itself for making a strong bid for an Israeli–Jordanian settlement. Assuming an all-round settlement with all the Arab states was for all practical

purposes ruled out, Jordan had to be the bridgehead. Since spectacular Israeli concessions to win over public opinion, like giving back Lydda and Ramle, were also out of the question, Shiloah thought of a development plan geared to increasing prosperity and absorbing some of the refugees which would have popular appeal and the support of a few influential personalities in Jordan. Such a plan had to show that economic development required first finance and second a steady market. That was where Israel would come in, for compensation would make a contribution to the finance, and Israel would provide the market. In other words, what Shiloah had in mind was to sell the idea of a settlement with Israel as part of a scheme with especial attraction for Jordan.

Shiloah was disappointed to find only the king and his personal physician when he arrived at the palace in Shuneh on 12 December 1950. Abdullah expressed his pleasure at having Samir Rifai as prime minister again and assured the visitor that Samir knew about the meeting and could not attend only because he was detained in Parliament. The atmosphere was eminently cordial but nothing concrete was discussed. Abdullah intimated that he hoped to be ready for more serious talks in about a fortnight when Samir would participate. So the meeting represented no more than the renewal of personal contact between two imaginative and venturesome individuals with responsibility for Jordanian–Israeli relations. Shiloah always had a soft spot for the king and he was obviously flattered when the latter made a point of calling him 'Aziz' (my dear).

Samir Rifai and Israel

Samir Rifai was chosen to succeed Said al-Mufti largely because of his moderate and reasonable attitude to Israel. To maximize his freedom of action in foreign policy, Samir formed a stable and moderate government, thereby increasing Abdullah's expectations of rapid progress towards a settlement with Israel. Yet public opinion, inflamed by Israel's aggressive behaviour on the border, could not be ignored. Samir's reputation was too

precious to waste on a settlement that could make him look like a traitor and that was sure to be denounced as a sell-out by the opposition in Jordan and in the Arab world. He realized that his country needed to come to terms with Israel but the personal sacrifice he was called upon to make seemed too great. He therefore tried to find a middle way that would give the king some satisfaction without however jeopardizing his own reputation and standing as a national leader.

Implementation of the armistice agreement was the key to Samir's policy. The king kept pressing for a general settlement with Israel. Previous governments, on the other hand, had done little to ensure the implementation of the armistice agreement, so Samir's policy was to accept the obligation to implement fully the armistice agreement, and in particular Article 8, if he could count on a co-operative and conciliatory attitude from Israel. His aim was to squeeze all the advantages he could from this agreement and to give Israel the minimum to which she was entitled. To the king local arrangements reached in this way could be presented as stepping stones towards a final settlement; to the public as real gains from the negotiations with Israel; and to Israel as the fulfilment of Jordan's obligations under the Rhodes agreement.

Neither King Abdullah nor the Israelis were satisfied with this policy. The king took the initiative by writing a letter to Ben-Gurion to suggest the renewal of talks and promising, if the Naharayim and Wadi Araba disputes could be settled, to implement Article 8 of the armistice agreement as a first step towards peace. Ben-Gurion and his advisers were worried that Article 8 would not be implemented even if they withdrew from Naharayim, so they accepted Shiloah's suggestion that an agreement on all the outstanding problems should be reached but that the decision on Naharayim could be published first and the decision on Mount Scopus later. Shiloah went to a meeting with Samir Rifai at Shuneh on 12 January 1951. Rifai suggested a re-examination of the Rhodes agreement as a basis for extended co-operation, and Shiloah was content to follow this approach. Elias Sasson, on the other hand, warned that Israel's consent to re-examine the Rhodes agreement could only be interpreted by the

Arabs as a sign of weakness and that it would create a dangerous precedent. Samir was asking for Israeli concessions in return for a full implementation of the Rhodes agreement. What he held out as a *de facto* state of peace, Sasson regarded as a trap and he accordingly recommended that armistice matters be left to the Mixed Armistice Commission and that high-level meetings be reserved for negotiating a peace settlement.

By this time, however, Ben-Gurion had come to question not just the feasibility but also the desirability of a political settlement with Jordan. His hostility to Britain ran so deep that he was reluctant to do anything that would strengthen Britain's position. To Moshe Sharett he revealed that he had grave doubts as to whether a settlement with Jordan was desirable at all. To Reuven Shiloah, who came to consult before a meeting with Abdullah on February 13, Ben-Gurion gave no less than seven reasons for his doubts. First, Jordan was not a natural or stable political entity but a regime based on one man who could die any minute and who was entirely dependent on Britain. Second, a political settlement with Jordan was liable to get in the way of a settlement with Egypt. Third, an accord with Abdullah without peace with Egypt could not lift the siege that Israel faced in the continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe. Iraq would continue to block Israel's path to the east, Syria to the north, and Egypt to the south. Fourth, such an accord would reinforce Britain's hold over the surrounding area. The fifth reason was presented in the form of a question: 'Do we have an interest in committing ourselves to such ridiculous borders?' Sixth, an accord with Egypt would settle Israel's relations with the entire Arab and Islamic world, open the door to the south as well as the north, and yield important economic links. Finally, Egypt was a natural and stable country and, objectively speaking, there was no conflict between her and Israel.

Abdullah's commitment to a settlement with Israel appears all the more remarkable against the background of Israeli prevarication. A day after Reuven Shiloah's visit, he summoned his ministers and handed Samir Rifai an Israeli memorandum which he asked him to read out. Samir stalled, so Abdullah explained that the memorandum dealt with infiltration across the border

and that it showed that there were two sides to every coin. He then reviewed the danger of a world war and warned that if war broke out Israel would not be able to pay compensation to the Arabs of Palestine, while the Western Powers would be too preoccupied with rearmament to pay any attention to Arab demands. If Jordan was not ready to conclude peace, at the very least she had to sign a non-aggression pact and any minister who had reservations about the king's policy was free to go. Before bringing the meeting to an end, Abdullah also reminded the prime minister of his undertaking to submit a paper on all the problems connected with the armistice.

Under pressure from the king, Rifai met Shiloah again on February 23. Abdullah did not appear at all, while Dr Sati and Abdel Ghani Karmi joined the negotiators only for dinner. No definite conclusions were reached, except for a general understanding that at this stage the discussions should be confined to the implementation and development of the armistice agreement, and for a mutual undertaking for each side to submit its proposals on this basis. In due course the two of them met again and Rifai submitted his proposals in writing. Shiloah did not submit counter-proposals but contented himself with certain negative reactions on the spot.

By the end of March the matter had progressed, or rather retrogressed, a stage further. Through Karmi, Israel's official reaction to the Jordanian proposals and a set of counter-proposals were conveyed to the king. The king was in general prepared to go along with the Israeli proposals and asked Karmi to inform Rifai. Rifai reacted strongly. He refused to agree to the suggestions regarding Naharayim, Tulkarem, and Mount Scopus, accused the Israelis of trying to squeeze all possible advantage out of a settlement without being willing to make any concessions, and demanded that Shiloah give him a formal reply in writing.

Shiloah sent Israel's formal reply to Rifai on April 16. It suggested that initially items outside the scope of the armistice agreement be excluded from the talks. It affirmed Israel's willingness to hand over Naharayim provided a prior understanding was

reached on all outstanding details connected with the armistice. Israel rejected Jordan's suggestion that Article 6 be extended to villages east of the demarcation line in the sector formerly held by the Iraqis but offered compensation to the landowners on the Israeli side who had chosen to move to Jordan. Israel also accepted in principle free movement on the Latrun–Jerusalem road and the operation of the Latrun pumping station to be achieved by the division of no man's land and suggested that the details be worked out by the military. But she expressed amazement at the suggestion that Mount Scopus be treated as Jordanian territory since the area had been held by Israeli forces prior to the military agreement on 7 July 1948. The entire Mount Scopus area, said the note, 'is and must remain Israel territory'.

The dispatch of this inflexible note was followed by another conference between Shiloah and King Abdullah. When Shiloah enquired whether the king wished to have Samir present, Abdullah replied that he preferred to speak to him alone since he was displeased with both Samir and Shiloah over the exchange of correspondence. He deplored the raising of the question of sovereignty over Mount Scopus and Israel's undiplomatic rejoinder and wondered whether both governments might withdraw their communications. Shiloah replied that it would be difficult but not impossible. He also mentioned that Israel might be prepared to release some of the blocked bank accounts in order to create a more favourable atmosphere. The king showed a lively interest in this prospect and said he thought it would serve a useful purpose. Shiloah's general impression, however, was that though Abdullah meant well and had good ideas, he had become a 'wishful thinker', lacking the power to implement the ideas that were his alone.

Samir Rifai replied to the Israeli communication on April 30. In essence he stated that

1. Jordan agreed with Israel that first the armistice agreement had to be implemented fully and only then consideration might be given to other matters.
2. Jordan considered that Articles 6 and 8 had thus far not been

implemented and that steps should be taken to rectify this state of affairs.

3. There appeared to be a basic difference of interpretation between Jordan and Israel on the meaning of these articles and especially on the meaning of Article 8 regarding the institutions on Mount Scopus.
4. Since the interpretation of an agreement was a legal matter, Jordan believed that an international tribunal should be asked to adjudicate.
5. Israel was invited to refer the dispute to the International Court of Justice or to submit alternative proposals for the settlement of the dispute by a competent judicial authority.

The king had sought to dissuade Samir from sending this reply, saying that the Israelis had promised to pay Jordan 'a lot of money'. Samir took the stand that hitherto the Israeli concessions had been limited to the offer to evacuate Naharayim and to release some blocked accounts. These were both due to Jordan as a matter of right and justice and could not therefore be considered as Israeli favours.

Karmi related to Moshe Sasson that the king had spent a whole hour with the Council of Ministers when Samir's reply was being considered but had failed to persuade Samir to modify his reply and walked out of the meeting in anger. Only strong royal pressure had induced Samir to add the final sentence inviting Israel to suggest an alternative judicial procedure for settling the dispute. Karmi also conveyed the following verbal message from the king to Shiloah: 'I stand by everything to which we agreed at our last meeting and remind you of your promise not to send your reply to Samir Pasha Rifai before you meet with me. The prime minister's trip to Egypt will give us a very good opportunity for a meeting.'

Samir was displeased with the king's attempts to maintain independent contact with the Israelis behind his back and with the role played by Karmi in these contacts. He asked Karmi to sign the official communication on his behalf so that he himself, as an Arab head of government, would be spared the embarrassment.

He also insisted that Karmi sign not with his initials (S.R.) but with the initials of his post of prime minister (P.M.). In Karmi's opinion the note was typical of Samir's basic approach to negotiations with Israel which was to play for time and prolong his stay in power. To this end nothing was better calculated than an appeal to the International Court of Justice.

Israel did not agree to refer the dispute to the International Court of Justice. She was not sure of the legal basis for her claim to sovereignty over Mount Scopus and feared that agreement to international arbitration would weaken her position and vindicate the Jordanian position. She also declined to suggest an alternative procedure for arbitration. Abdullah had another visit from Shiloah on May 11, while his prime minister was out of the country, and Mount Scopus was discussed without any concrete result. This appears to have been the last meeting between the king and the Israeli envoy. Relations between the two countries thus reached a dead-end at the official level. There was no meeting of minds, and no real negotiations took place. When he assumed power, Samir Rifai had counted on a co-operative and conciliatory attitude from Israel, and when this was not forthcoming he dug his heels in. King Abdullah, on the other hand, was anxious to move forward to a settlement with Israel but was increasingly isolated and powerless in his quest for peace.

Moshe Sasson described this process as 'the sinking of King Abdullah's regime'. He and his colleagues in the Middle East Department recognized that the effective challenge mounted by the Palestinians to Abdullah's absolute rule changed the internal balance of power within the enlarged kingdom in a way that was detrimental to the prospects of peace. The internal changes and their implications for Israel were clearly noted in a position paper written by Moshe Sasson in January 1951:

> Since the annexation of the Arab parts of Palestine to Transjordan and since the initialling of the agreement, we have been witnessing a process of decline in Abdullah's real power on the one hand and the rise of opposition and anti-Israeli groups on the other. This process limits the prospects of peace with Transjordan and narrows the possibility of interim arrangements. Over the last year we have witnessed a parallel

process of reduction in the Jordanian demands from Israel on the one hand and a diminution in the aims of the negotiations on the other (peace–non-aggression–interim arrangements–revision of the Rhodes agreement). The conclusion that must be drawn is that our traditional support for the Jordanian royal court and fight against the opposition circles will not take us towards the desired target. We have to look for a new approach and new methods.

There was very little that was new, however, in Israel's approach to Jordan during the premiership of Samir Rifai. The meetings between the king and the prime minister and Shiloah continued intermittently until the king's death but the efforts were switched away from a general peace settlement to extended co-operation under the Rhodes agreement. Even in working towards this modest goal, the two sides made very little progress. The positive results of these efforts were confined to a settlement of the frontier dispute in Wadi Araba and an agreement to establish liaison between the local commanders so that border incidents and infiltration could be dealt with in a more co-operative fashion. Further accord was prevented by the dispute over sovereignty in Mount Scopus. In June Jordan protested to the secretary-general of the United Nations against Israeli interference with the waters of the River Jordan. After this, relations between the two countries worsened steadily and the death of the king ended the era of personal diplomacy.

The murder of King Abdullah

In the last weeks of his life Abdullah was a lonely and disappointed man and may have even had a premonition of his approaching end. Three weeks before his death he invited an American officer of the Palestine Conciliation Commission named Hamilton Fisher to his palace in Amman. Abdel Ghani Karmi acted as interpreter. After discussing certain specific aspects of Jordanian–Israeli relations, Abdullah asked Fisher to stay and talk to him about what he called 'a most personal and confidential problem which is breaking my heart'. This problem was that of peace with Israel. 'I am an old man', said Abdullah. 'I

know that my power is limited; I know that I am hated by my own son . . . I also know that my own people distrust me because of my peace efforts. But despite all that, I know that I could get peace settled if I only had some encouragement and could get any reasonable concessions from Israel.'

Fisher pointed out to the 69-year-old monarch that it was unlikely that any Israeli government on the eve of general elections would be prepared to make concessions it had refused eighteen months previously. Abdullah agreed, but still wanted to raise the matter again after the elections if these should result in the establishment of a 'stable and sane Jewish government'. Fisher then asked what in the king's opinion would be the reaction of the Arab League and of his own government to such a move. The king declared that he and his government were prepared to defy the Arab League but 'we cannot defy my own people'. He said his own people distrusted him because they suspected him of wanting to make peace without any concessions by Israel. He emphasized that this was an obstacle which he could not overcome. 'Please understand', he said, 'that despite the Arab League I would have the support of my own people and the tacit support at least of the British if I could justify a peace by pointing to concessions made by the Jews. But without any concessions from them I am defeated before I even start.'

Elaborating on the concessions that might be required by Jordan, the king spoke of territorial adjustments in the Triangle or elsewhere and of a corridor to the Gaza Strip which would become Jordanian territory. Concerning the refugees he said he realized that wholesale repatriation or even complete compensation was impossible. But he expressed his conviction that the bitterness could be alleviated if the propertied refugees were permitted to go to Israel for a limited period to settle their affairs and if such refugees could get at least the income from their property, even if not the property itself. This and a partial release of the blocked accounts would make it possible for many to re-establish themselves elsewhere and to forget their bitterness.

The king ended the interview by saying 'Please help me. I can do it if I can get some help and encouragement. But I am an old

man. I have not much time left and I don't want to die of a broken heart.' Fisher had had frequent opportunities for informal discussions with the king in the past but had not seen him for several months prior to this meeting and was struck by the fact that the latter had aged greatly and that his appeal both at the beginning and at the end of this confidential interview was almost an imploring one.

It was not a broken heart that killed Abdullah but a bullet in the head. The campaign of vilification against Abdullah finally served as the warrant for regicide. Palestine had become a symbol of shame, and shame, as the Arabs say, can only be washed with blood. On Friday, 20 July 1951, Abdullah went to pray at the Al-Aksa Mosque in the Old City of Jerusalem, accompanied by his grandson, Husayn, and an Arab Legion bodyguard. They entered the vast courtyard surrounding the Muslim Holy Places just before twelve. First Abdullah visited the tomb of his father and then proceeded to the entrance of the Great Mosque where the Koran was being recited to about two thousand worshippers. As he stepped across the threshold, the old shaikh of the mosque, a venerable ecclesiastic with a long white beard, came forward to kiss his hand. The king's guard fell back and as they did so, a young man stepped out from behind the massive door of the Mosque, pressed a pistol to the king's ear and fired a solitary shot which killed him instantly. The king fell forward and his turban rolled away across the marble pavement. The murderer continued to fire left and right but was swiftly done to death by the frenzied royal bodyguard.

Abdullah remained a fatalist to the end. He had been warned of the plots against him, but he replied with an Arabic proverb: 'Until my day comes nobody can harm me: when the day comes nobody can guard me.' One reason for the king's determination to go to pray in Jerusalem despite pleas and warnings from various quarters was known only to a handful of people at the time and has remained a closely guarded secret: the king had arranged to meet Reuven Shiloah and Moshe Sasson in the house of Abdel Ghani Karmi in Jerusalem on Saturday, July 21. The contact with Israel was thus maintained, in face of all the opposition

and the hazards involved, literally until the king's dying day.

Yet it would be erroneous to conclude that King Abdullah was assassinated just because of his contacts with the Israelis and because of his well-known desire to make peace with them. The real background to the murder was the long-standing rivalry between Abdullah and the Husaynis. It is true that his opponents were opposed to a settlement with Israel, but this was not their sole reason for instigating his murder. Nor was the assassination part of a broad Palestinian bid to capture power in Jordan or to reverse Jordanian foreign policy. The conspirators did not propose to renew the war against Israel. Some of them were moved by the dream of an independent, resurgent, Arab Palestine, and by the fear of further Jewish advances at the cost of the Palestinian Arabs which the British-controlled Arab Legion might be either unable or unwilling to prevent. It was significant that all the conspirators were Palestinian Arabs who belonged to the mufti's camp. But although all the signs seemed to point to the shadowy figure of the mufti, no evidence was discovered of his direct complicity in the murder.

Abdullah's death evoked very different reactions. There was jubilation in some of the Palestinian refugee camps: the 'traitor' had been punished. The majority of the inhabitants of Arab Jerusalem barely concealed their joy at the murder of Abdullah—'the dog who sold Palestine to the Zionists'. The mufti's name was on everybody's lips. Most people liked Prince Talal, Abdullah's heir, because of his patriotic views and because he had shown courage in standing up to his father and to Glubb. It was believed that he would co-operate with the mufti in the struggle to liberate Palestine. Nayef, the younger brother and son of a Turkish woman, was regarded as no better than the father.

News of the death of the leader of the Hashemite bloc was also received with glee in the non-Hashemite Arab countries and provoked a frenetic spate of inter-Arab intrigues, dynastic rivalries, and jockeying for power. Nuri al-Said launched his bid for union between Jordan and Iraq under the Iraqi crown at Abdullah's funeral. He backed the pretensions of Nayef against the legitimate heir Talal, who was undergoing psychiatric treat-

ment in Switzerland, and he sided with Tawfiq Abul Huda against Samir Rifai, who had tendered his resignation a few days after the murder. The Egyptian Legation in Amman started agitating for the independence of Arab Palestine under a mandate from the Arab League, while the Saudi legation pressed for partition of the whole kingdom, the northern part going to Syria and the southern part to Saudi Arabia.

In official Israeli circles the reaction to Abdullah's assassination was one of profound shock and concern for the future. Abdullah's assassination was generally considered a serious blow to Israel since he was seen as the closest thing to a friend of Israel among the Arab leaders. No one felt the blow more acutely than Elias Sasson; he described Abdullah's disappearance from the political scene as a grave loss to Jordan, to the Arab world, to the Western world, and to Israel. 'King Abdullah', observed Sasson, 'was the only Arab statesman who showed an understanding for our national renewal, a sincere desire to come to a settlement with us, and a realistic attitude to most of our demands and arguments . . . We as well as some of the Arabs and foreigners are going to feel for a long time to come his absence, and to regret more than a little his removal from our midst.'

It was left to Moshe Sasson to analyse the likely consequences of the removal for Israel. 'The murder of Abdullah', wrote Sasson junior, 'brought to a tragic end the process that we called "the sinking of Abdullah's regime".' Sasson did not wish to speculate on the question of which would have been preferable—the slow death of a regime that was full of genuine desires and faint hopes for peace with Israel, or the sudden end that wrenched Israel back from the world of mutual desires to the world of mutual capabilities and possibilities. What Sasson saw very clearly was that with Abdullah's death the political centre of gravity would shift further away from the royal court to the government and the House of Representatives. In the Arab arena Sasson predicted that the removal of the head of the house of Hashem and the strengthening of the Egyptian bloc in the Arab League would lead to greater co-operation, if not actual union, between the two Hashemite countries.

In the new Jordanian and inter-Arab constellation it would no longer be possible, thought Sasson, to continue with an approach which was based on the declared desire for peace but evaded the concrete problems that called for a solution, like the refugee problem. Progress towards a settlement would depend on Israel's ability to find real solutions to the fundamental problems in her relations with the country with which she shared the longest of her borders.

In political circles the reaction to Abdullah's death was much less measured. The crisis and the possibility that Jordan would be incorporated into Iraq revived the Revisionist Zionists' claim to the whole of western Palestine. The crisis also whetted David Ben-Gurion's appetite for expansion—not altogether surprisingly since when it came to dealing with the Arabs, he had more in common with Zeev Jabotinsky and Menachem Begin than he did with the moderates inside his own party. Until 1951 he accepted the territorial status quo or at any rate did nothing deliberately to disturb it. Abdullah's death marked a turning point in his thinking. He concluded that peace with the Arabs could not be attained by negotiation; they would have to be deterred, coerced, and intimidated. In addition, he no longer saw any compelling reason why Israel should not extend her borders to the Jordan to give herself more land and strategic depth, and to rectify the mistake of late 1948 which he had termed a cause for weeping for generations.

Thus, on hearing the news of Abdullah's assassination, Ben-Gurion's attitude changed with dramatic suddenness. The chief of staff was ill, so Ben-Gurion summoned his deputy, Gen. Mordechai Makleff, early in the morning of July 21 and asked what trained and armed forces could be despatched to capture the territory up to the Jordan in the event of Abdullah's legacy being annexed by Iraq. Makleff replied that they had three brigades and five battalions, and that at four days' notice they could mobilize seven or eight brigades, field artillery, and two air force squadrons. He added that this force would be sufficient to capture the territory, and that they had adequate reserves for protecting their borders with Syria and Egypt.

Not content with the contingency plan to capture the West Bank, Ben-Gurion began to consider the possibility of seizing the entire Sinai Peninsula, all the way up to the Suez Canal. Later in the day he had a visit from Benjamin Akzin, a former secretary to Zeev Jabotinsky and a professor of political science at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Akzin gave Ben-Gurion the idea of an approach to Britain to suggest the expulsion of the Egyptians from Sinai to make way for British bases there and to turn the Suez Canal into an international waterway. At the same time it could be suggested to Britain that Israel's border should be the Jordan, while Britain took Transjordan. The more Ben-Gurion thought about the idea of capturing Sinai with the help of the British the more he liked it, especially since the Sinai Peninsula, unlike the West Bank, was not densely populated with Arabs. Shiloah was dispatched to London and spoke to a number of people but the reaction to his suggestions was less than enthusiastic. In the end Ben-Gurion had to abandon the idea of joint Anglo-Israeli action against Egypt until five years later, and the capture of both Sinai and the West Bank was left to Ben-Gurion's successors sixteen years later.

The fatal shot at the entrance to the Great Mosque was thus followed by an immediate re-evaluation of Israeli policy. The fear that Abdullah's death would precipitate a violent change in Jordan's attitude to Israel turned out to be misplaced. Talal did not harbour in his heart the same deep yearning for peace with Israel as his father had, but his government, headed by Tawfiq Abul Huda, was careful to observe the armistice agreement. The new government made it clear that it would abandon Abdullah's efforts to realize the Greater Syria scheme and that it would not continue his policy of seeking a bilateral settlement with Israel. But it had no wish to renew the war against Israel or to prepare actively for the second round. Thus the special relationship between the Hashemites and the Zionists survived the death of its most dedicated proponent, though not entirely intact.

19

Conclusion

The clash between Arabs and Jews in Palestine is one of the deepest, gravest, and most protracted international conflicts of modern times. It is difficult to imagine more bitter enmity than that between the Arabs and Jews during the decades leading up to and following the emergence of the State of Israel. Indeed, the Arab–Israeli conflict has sometimes been described as a 'pure' conflict, that is to say one in which the interests of the two protagonists are completely and irreconcilably opposed.

The present book implicitly challenges this widely held view of conflict as a simple bipolar affair in which a monolithic and implacably hostile Arab world is pitted against the Jews. It does so by exploring the special relationship that slowly but steadily evolved between Amir Abdullah of Transjordan (later king of Jordan) on the one hand and the Jewish Agency followed by the State of Israel on the other. Abdullah is presented here as an independent actor with needs and aspirations that did not normally coincide with those of the Palestinian Arabs and their supporters. The general picture that emerges from this particular angle of vision is not one of a stark bipolar confrontation but of a more complex triangular relationship involving Palestinian Arabs, Jews, and the ruler of Transjordan. Other actors enter the picture at different points and complicate it further, notably the neighbouring Arab states, the Arab League, Britain, the United States, and the United Nations. But the main emphasis throughout this study is on only two of the actors in the struggle for Palestine: Abdullah and the Zionist movement.

This study has attempted to combine a general account of the origins and evolution of the special relationship between Abdullah and the Zionist movement with a more detailed account of the period from 1947 to 1951. The aim was to identify the po-

litical and strategic rationale behind this relationship, to examine the forces that constrained the development of this relationship into a formal and open alliance, and to place this relationship in the broader context of the Arab–Jewish conflict over Palestine. The late 1940s were singled out for in-depth treatment because this was the most critical period in the history of Palestine, and one that saw the defeat of the Palestinian national movement, the partition of the country, and the emergence of the State of Israel. More than any other period, the late 1940s highlight the forces at play, the role and aims of the principal actors in the struggle for Palestine, and the scope, modalities, and limits of collaboration between Abdullah and the nascent State of Israel.

The relationship between Transjordan and the Zionist movement was special in more ways than one. It was a relationship based on one man—Abdullah. It was not the amirate of Transjordan or the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan but the ruler of this kingdom who alone was responsible for the formulation and conduct of policy towards the Jewish community in Palestine and later the State of Israel. Other individuals and institutions, like court officials, the government, and Parliament, were involved, but usually either as servants and emissaries of the king or as a pressure group working against him. The policy itself always originated with the king, who as far as possible also kept the actual conduct of relations in his own hands. There was thus an asymmetry between the two sides: on the Jordanian side policy was made by an absolute ruler; on the Israeli side there was a more democratic and institutionalized process of decision-making involving a government with collective responsibility and a modern civilian and military bureaucracy charged with the conduct of policy on a day-to-day basis.

The Jewish leaders, for their part, were acutely aware that in their relations with their neighbour to the east they depended almost entirely on one individual and they regretted that it proved impossible to develop normal state-to-state relations even after both countries had attained formal independence. But for the most part they accepted this exclusive link with the royal court as an unfortunate fact of life. Typical of this attitude was a comment

made by Ben-Gurion in a consultation on Arab policy held on 1 October 1952. 'We did have one man', recalled Ben-Gurion, 'who we knew wanted peace with Israel. We tried to negotiate with him, but the British interfered, and then a bullet came and put an end to the business. With the removal of the Abdullah factor, the whole matter was finished.'

The business started when the British put the Hijazi warlord in charge of the 'vacant lot' of Transjordan in 1921 and it did not finish until thirty years later. No sooner was he installed in Amman when the new ruler began to have contact with the Jews who were building their 'national home' on the other side of the Jordan. From the start it was a tangled relationship compounded by deception and self-deception in almost equal measure. The Zionists could not forget that the 'national home' they were promised by Balfour included Transjordan as well as Palestine; Abdullah hoped they would settle for autonomy, for a 'Hebrew republic' under his tutelage. Money changed hands but there were also bonds of genuine affection between the impecunious amir and the Jewish Arabists, especially Elias Sasson. Naked self-interest and raw power had its place in the traffic between the two sides, but so did tolerance, mutual sympathy, readiness to compromise, and, above all, pragmatism.

To begin with, Palestine did not feature prominently in Abdullah's plans for territorial expansion. He was nothing if not ambitious and he pursued his ambition in all directions, often simultaneously. But it was towards realizing the Greater Syria scheme that most of his efforts were devoted rather than towards making himself king of Palestine. In the first decade and a half of his reign, Palestine was almost a sideshow for Abdullah and the emphasis in his dealings with the Jewish Agency was on economic co-operation, leasing land, and granting concessions to business enterprises. It was not until 1937 when the Peel Commission suggested that Palestine might be partitioned and that Abdullah might rule the Arab part that he began to take Palestine seriously as an outlet for his territorial ambition.

The Peel plan, which was rejected by all the Arab leaders except Abdullah, also brought about a major change in Zionist policy.

Following the defeat of the plan, a decisive shift took place in support of the principle of partition and in favour of partitioning Palestine with Abdullah rather than with the Palestine Arabs. Ben-Gurion led the way with his scheme for turning the British mandate into two independent states, 'Judea' and 'Abdallia'. A new strategy was born, envisaging only two states between the sea and the eastern desert, with Abdullah ruling over the Arab part. It was this basic strategy that was to guide the Zionist struggle for statehood. Thus a decade before the State of Israel was born and three decades before its ruling Labour Party adopted the much-vaunted 'Jordanian option', there was already in existence a distinctive Zionist political orientation which was pro-partition, pro-Transjordan, and pro-Hashemite.

In the aftermath of the Second World War and Nazi Germany's destruction of European Jewry, the Jewish Agency adopted partition as its official platform and actively began to mobilize Arab support for this compromise solution. Its efforts in Egypt were crowned with success in 1946 but this success was short-lived. Ismail Sidqi's fall from power left Abdullah as the only Arab leader who accepted partition and, by implication, a Jewish state. The Jewish Agency was looking for an Arab force of real political weight that would agree to the establishment of a Jewish state and promise to live in peace alongside it, and Abdullah was the only one. At the two meetings between Elias Sasson and Abdullah in August 1946 an agreement in principle was reached in favour of the partition of Palestine and the merger of the Arab part with Transjordan. More money changed hands. Once the two sides perceived that their interests converged, the long-standing contacts and discussions between them began to crystallize into a political and strategic partnership. Nothing was put down on paper, but from late 1946 onwards, each, moved by its own needs and interests, began to treat the other as a partner in the struggle for Palestine.

Britain's announcement of her decision to withdraw from Palestine and referral of the problem to the United Nations spurred the Jewish Agency and Abdullah to co-ordinate their respective strategies. This was achieved in a series of talks

culminating in the famous meeting between Golda Meir and Abdullah on 17 November 1947. At this meeting Mrs Meir firmly rejected Abdullah's suggestion of a Hebrew republic within a Greater Transjordan. But she made it clear that she and her colleagues would look with favour on Abdullah's plan to pre-empt the mufti and annex 'the Arab part' of Palestine in return for recognition of the Jewish state. Abdullah agreed to sign a written agreement on this basis and suggested a second meeting to work out the details of this agreement in the light of the decision that was about to be reached at the United Nations.

The United Nations pronounced its verdict for partitioning Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state on November 29 but the second meeting did not take place until six months later. In between there was plenty of scope for misunderstanding, mistrust, and mutual suspicion, some of which was justified and some not. The UN plan confronted Abdullah with a genuine security problem in that the proposed Arab state seemed destined to be ruled by his arch enemy, the mufti. The Zionist leaders, although they accepted the UN plan, had deep misgivings about the proposed Arab state. Since the Zionists did not want the mufti at any price and the British, for strategic reasons, were equally opposed to a mufti state, this strong convergence of interests in the absence of equally strong opposing forces would have probably led to a conclusion favourable to Abdullah without all the underhand plotting and planning. But this was not self-evident at the time.

Having reached a broad understanding with the Zionists about the future of post-mandatory Palestine, Abdullah turned his attention to the task of securing British approval for a Transjordanian bid in Palestine. This approval was finally conveyed by Ernest Bevin himself at his meeting with Transjordan's prime minister in February 1948. In effect, Bevin gave the green light to the partition of mandatory Palestine between Transjordan and Israel, leaving the Palestine Arabs out in the cold. To help their protégé secure his share, the British also decided not to withdraw the Arab Legion units that served under their overall command in Palestine. During the last two months of the mandate when

Palestinian society began to disintegrate and the first wave of refugees was set in motion, Britain did not intervene to contain the Zionist military offensive and only helped to prepare the ground for a take-over of the residue of Arab Palestine by the Arab Legion. The British role was not insignificant in encouraging Abdullah to reach an agreement with the Zionists and it was crucial in enforcing this agreement and in preventing the Arab Legion from encroaching on the territory of the Jewish state. Thus, whatever sins may have been committed by the British during the twilight of their rule in Palestine, inciting Abdullah to use force to prevent the emergence of a Jewish state was not one of them.

Yet this was precisely what the founders of this state feared most of all as the British mandate approached its inglorious end. There were three principal scenarios for the eastern front in the coming war. The first was that Abdullah would avoid military intervention in Palestine altogether and keep his army on the eastern side of the Jordan. The second scenario was for limited Transjordanian military intervention in Palestine going only up to the border of the Jewish state, in line with the understanding that Abdullah had reached with Golda Meir. The third scenario was that, upon expiry of the mandate, Abdullah would disregard the UN borders and send the Legion to overrun most of Palestine, leaving a rump Jewish state so weak that it would have to throw itself on the mercy of the British government. The first scenario had never been considered as a realistic possibility; the second looked increasingly unlikely in the light of Abdullah's militant public declarations; and it seemed as if the third scenario was about to unfold. Thus, on the threshold of proclaiming their independence, the architects of the new state faced the prospect of the collapse of their pro-Hashemite strategy.

Golda Meir was dispatched to Amman on May 10 in a last-minute effort to avert the third and worst possible scenario. Her mission was not to negotiate with Abdullah but to warn him not to attack the Jewish state. She wanted to know whether the understanding between them still held. The king was evasive. Previously, he said, he had been alone, now other Arabs were

involved and he was 'one of five'. The proceedings consisted of both sides stating their case and agreeing to differ: Mrs Meir said that the Jews would accept nothing less than full independence within the borders of the UN partition plan and the king said he could not go further than Jewish autonomy within a larger Transjordan.

Did Abdullah betray his Jewish friends? Did he fling any pact he may have had with them to the wind? Mrs Meir was later to claim that Abdullah broke his promise to her, that their second meeting ended in total failure, and that they parted as enemies. The charge against Abdullah was that when the moment of truth arrived, he revoked his pledge not to attack the Jewish state and threw in his lot with the rest of the Arab world. And this charge helped to propagate the view of the 1948 war as a carefully orchestrated and monolithic all-Arab invasion directed at strangling the Jewish state at birth. But Mrs Meir's contemporary account of her second meeting with Abdullah did not cast him quite so unambiguously in the role of villain and traitor reserved for him in subsequent Zionist historiography. He did not entirely betray his early agreement with her, nor was he entirely loyal to it, but was somewhere in the middle. He did not say that he would attack the Jewish state and he even recognized that if the Jews were attacked they would have to repel the attackers. Though lacking in precision, what he said was most consistent with the second scenario of limited military intervention to gain control of the Arab part of Palestine.

Also consistent with this scenario was Abdullah's refusal to co-operate in implementing the Arab League's invasion plan, which was aimed at preventing the creation of a Jewish state, and his adoption of an alternative strategy which was designed to secure the West Bank for Transjordan and avoid as far as possible a head-on clash with the Jewish forces. Glubb Pasha was fully behind this limited strategy, as is clear from the way he deployed the Arab Legion units and from his dispatch of Colonel Goldie across the line in a vain attempt to define in advance the areas of Palestine to be occupied by the two forces.

Peaceful partition was not to be, but there was still a chance of

partitioning Palestine in war and this chance was not lost on either Abdullah or Ben-Gurion. To this extent the strategic interests of the two sides on the eve of the war still converged, despite the political differences that could not be resolved at the second meeting between Golda Meir and Abdullah. Moreover, the participation of the Arab Legion in the invasion of Palestine had one consequence which was very welcome to the Jewish side: it finally stamped out any possibility of an independent Palestinian state. Even as the invasion was about to be launched and contact between the two sides was severed, the aims of Ben-Gurion and Abdullah were not as far apart as were the aims of Abdullah and those of the other members of the Arab League who took part in the invasion. This was indeed one of the great paradoxes of the Arab–Israeli war that broke out on May 15, the morning after the State of Israel was proclaimed.

The Transjordanians and the Israelis fought a limited war. When the actual circumstances of the Arab invasion are examined, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Abdullah fulfilled his part of the original agreement with Golda Meir despite the apparent collapse of this agreement by the time of their second meeting. The original agreement stood the test of war precisely because it was built on parallel long-term interests rather than on personal whim or temporary convenience. With one or two minor exceptions the Transjordanians did not attack the territory of the Jewish state. The only major clash occurred in Jerusalem which had not been covered by any agreement since under the UN plan it was destined to constitute a separate international enclave. Here it was the Israelis who provoked the fight by the offensive actions they took in the middle of May against the Arab quarters and in the Old City. Everywhere else that unwritten understanding of November 1947 held: the Transjordanians avoided attack on Israel's territory and avoided clashing with its armed forces. By the end of the first week of fighting Abdullah secured his basic objective of occupying central Palestine and the Legion was deployed in defensive positions in the purely Arab areas adjacent to the Jordan. When the second round of fighting broke out, very much against Abdullah's wishes, it was the Israeli

army that violated the understanding by attacking the Arab Legion at various places earmarked for Arab sovereignty such as Lydda, Ramle, and Latrun. Despite these clashes, the general strategic picture was characterized by limited objectives and mutual Transjordanian–Israeli restraint in the latter part of the war. When Israel attacked Egypt in October and again in December, Transjordan remained neutral. Although Israel had the military capability to capture the entire area west of the Jordan, her leaders decided, for a variety of reasons of which the understanding with Transjordan was only one, not to exercise this option. Their basic pro-Hashemite orientation and their preference for having Abdullah as their partner in the partition of Palestine persisted despite all the disappointments, the fighting and the bloodshed.

After the guns fell silent, the 'Transjordan first' policy continued to prevail in the face of some support, especially on the left, for an 'Egypt first' policy. Abdullah was the only Arab leader to take personal charge of the conduct of the negotiations to bring the war to an end. The real armistice negotiations between Transjordan and Israel were conducted not in Rhodes under the auspices of the UN but face-to-face with Abdullah in his winter palace at Shuneh. Very strong pressure was exerted by the Israeli negotiators on the king to cede some of the territory previously held by the Iraqi army yet they were careful not to cross the threshold between coercive diplomacy and the actual resort to force. Abdullah was now alone with no Arab allies and little comfort from Britain. With the Israeli troops outnumbering the Arab Legion by ten to one, its vulnerability in Palestine was exposed. The king caved in and handed over the 'Little Triangle'. By stopping short of challenging Abdullah's principal gain from the war—the possession of central Palestine—the Israelis made it slightly easier for him to yield the piece of territory that was presented as being of little value to him but of vital strategic importance to them.

In general, the armistice demarcation line between Transjordan and Israel, including the division of Jerusalem, was not imposed on the friendly belligerents by external pressure or by the

military reality on the ground at the end of the war, but was rather the product of mutual agreement between Abdullah and the Israelis. Jerusalem, the scene of some of the fiercest and bloodiest fighting of the entire war, was quietly partitioned between the two sides in order to pre-empt the United Nations' move to turn it into an international city. The Arab states that had rejected the UN partition plan of November 1947 now ironically became enthusiastic proponents of a UN regime for the Holy City. Abdullah understood that his Arab rivals were out to deprive him of the most glittering prize he had won in the war. So he and the Israelis bypassed the UN and partitioned Jerusalem between themselves in a remarkable display of the common interests that set them apart from the rest of the Arab world.

Even after the yielding of the 'Little Triangle' under duress, Abdullah emerged as the most successful Arab participant from the first Arab–Israeli war. That 'falcon trapped in a canary's cage' at long last succeeded in breaking out and expanding his exiguous dominion. He not only held on to the Old City and East Jerusalem, but also acquired additional land and population on the West Bank of the River Jordan. His Arab detractors denounced Abdullah as a traitor and a quisling and at least one British official described him as 'a born land-grabber'. No saint, Abdullah ibn Husayn. Yet those who sit in judgement upon him should recall that the first Arab–Israeli war was a general land-grab, and the real distinction was not between saints and devils but between more successful and less successful land-grabbers. In Abdullah's defence it could at least be argued that he saved what he could of the dismal wreck of Arab Palestine which is more than can be said for his detractors. With his extraordinary sense of realism and moderation, his practice in war and peace of the art of the possible, his willingness to look beyond ideological and religious differences, and his penchant for the sly, saving bargain, he was typical of a Middle Eastern political culture that was blown away by the politics of zeal, with ruinous results for the Arab world in the Palestine war and its aftermath.

The end of the war brought no respite from the endemic inter-Arab rivalries that were in large measure responsible for the

Palestine catastrophe; indeed, they intensified in the aftermath of the war. Unable to close ranks in face of the bitter consequences of defeat, the Arabs indulged in mutual recrimination and a search for scapegoats that further weakened their position in the diplomatic negotiations that followed. Abdullah was singled out for the most vituperative attacks because he had accepted partition, because he was willing to trade on Palestinian rights, and because he was widely suspected of being in cahoots with the Israelis against his Arab kinsmen. Though he had done well out of the war in terms of territory, Abdullah was thus doomed to spend the closing years of his reign in bitter conflict with his fellow Arabs. In Palestine he met his triumph and his nemesis.

Undeterred by the hostile propaganda and the shrill charges of treason levelled against him. Abdullah pressed on with the incorporation of the West Bank into his realm. 'Union' between the two banks of the Jordan was formally proclaimed in April 1950. The Palestinians for the most part resigned themselves to annexation by Jordan, if only to avert the threat of being overrun by the Israeli army. They were so demoralized, divided, and helpless that the idea of an independent Palestinian state was no more than a pipe-dream and the union of the two banks of the Jordan was the most sensible course of action open to them. Yet Abdullah's claim to the West Bank was rejected by all the other members of the Arab League. It was recognized officially only by Britain and Pakistan. Israel, however, should be added to the roster since her leaders privately endorsed the annexation at a time when every Arab state opposed it.

Abdullah wanted to secure his enlarged kingdom by concluding a peace settlement with Israel and for a while he pursued both aims simultaneously. His negotiations for an overall settlement with Israel were protracted and tortuous but they looked on the verge of a dramatic breakthrough in February 1950 when the 'Draft Agreement between Israel and Jordan' was initialled. At this point Abdullah realistically estimated that he could not simultaneously defy the Arab League on both issues, so he suspended the talks with Israel in order to go forward with the union of the two banks. The suspension was meant to be temporary

but the attempt to sign a peace treaty, though subsequently renewed, never regained its momentum. In retrospect it is clear that the suspension of the talks constituted a massive and irreversible defeat in Abdullah's quest for peace. The failure of these talks marked the end of serious Arab–Israeli peace negotiations down to President Anwar Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in 1977. Abdullah himself continued his high-level talks with the Israelis literally until his dying day, but February 1950 was the closest the two countries ever came to concluding a formal peace treaty.

Two principal factors were responsible for the failure of the peace negotiations: Israel's strength and Abdullah's weakness. Israel's resounding military victory in the first full-scale confrontation with all the surrounding Arab states lessened its interest in accommodation and compromise. After this victory, Israeli intransigence was more extreme than that of the Arabs and constituted a major factor in preventing a peaceful settlement. The armistice agreements were thought to meet Israel's essential need for recognition, security, and international legitimacy. Many peace proposals made by Arab governments and neutral mediators were turned down because it was believed that the peace on offer was not worth the price that was being demanded. Ben-Gurion in particular lent his authority to the school of thought which held that Israel should be in no hurry to conclude a formal peace settlement and that by appearing over-eager she would only encourage the Arabs to step up their demands. He banked on the status quo. Consequently, Israel's diplomatic stance hardened, offering little by way of concessions to the Arabs and insisting that a peace settlement should be based substantially on the territorial status quo and the non-repatriation of the Palestinian refugees. It is not that Ben-Gurion did not want peace but rather that he was not ready for a peace that involved any appreciable Israeli concessions either in territory or on the refugee front. This is why his response to the Egyptian and Syrian peace feelers was so extraordinarily lukewarm. For him and the other founding fathers the supreme goal was not peace but Zionism: the building of a Jewish state, growth, immigration, the gathering in of the exiles. If peace served this supreme goal,

they were all for it; if not, then the fulfilment of the Zionist mission took precedence over peace with their Arab neighbours.

Towards King Abdullah the attitude of the founding fathers was generally more positive. He had been Israel's 'best enemy' in war and he was regarded as having the best credentials to be a partner in peace. Objectively there was no Palestinian option in 1949 any more than there had been in 1947. If they nevertheless flirted with the Palestinian option in 1949 it was largely in order to give themselves more leverage in their bargaining with Abdullah. The case for Abdullah was the one that stood the test of time both because of his genuine readiness to make peace and because of his power on the ground. And yet the Israeli leaders in general and Ben-Gurion in particular tended to belittle Abdullah, to see him as a British puppet, and to underrate the risks he assumed and the courage he displayed in swimming against the powerful current of Arab hostility towards their state. The Israelis unquestionably wanted a settlement with Abdullah and even offered him an outlet to the Mediterranean with a narrow corridor, 50–100 metres wide, under Jordanian sovereignty leading to it, as well as various economic concessions and one unsolicited subsidy. But this was not enough. The king needed to recover sufficient lost territory to justify in the eyes of the Arab world the making of peace with Israel. The Israelis felt that a corridor of the required width would jeopardize their security and they were not prepared to disgorge any significant area of Palestine to attain peace.

The other principal reason for the failure of the peace talks with Jordan was Abdullah's weakness or what the Israeli Arabists termed 'the sinking of Abdullah's regime'. By adding the West Bank and its inhabitants to his kingdom, Abdullah helped to unleash forces that ended up by eroding his previously absolute personal rule. In the new political constellation created by the union, he could no longer lay down the law in the arbitrary fashion to which he was accustomed but had to take account of public opinion, of the feelings of his Palestinian subjects, of Parliament, and above all of the growing opposition among his own ministers to his policy of accommodation with Israel. The anti-peace faction in the Jordanian government, bolstered by the

popular anti-Israeli groundswell and pan-Arab opposition to negotiations with Israel, ultimately prevailed. The king's own commitment to peace was unaffected by the new setting but his ability to give practical expression to this commitment was seriously diminished.

In the end Abdullah failed to crown his contacts with the Jewish Agency and the State of Israel in the years from 1921 to 1951 with a peace treaty or to normalize relations between the two states. A formal and comprehensive peace settlement with Israel was beyond his power. But he established the pattern for mutual understanding, mutual tolerance, and practical co-operation between the two states in dealing with common problems. And he left behind a legacy of moderation and realism that continued to guide Jordanian foreign policy during the brief interregnum of his son Talal and the long reign of his grandson Husayn.

Israel's foreign policy, too, has shown a not-so-secret bias in favour of Jordan and its Hashemite rulers. The desire to preserve and consolidate the achievements of 1948 predisposed Israel's leaders to continue to cultivate the special relationship with the Hashemite kings. In word as well as deed Israel became committed to the survival of the Hashemite monarchy in Amman. Maintaining the existence, the political stability, and the territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Jordan became a central tenet in the political-strategic doctrine of the State of Israel. After the shock of Abdullah's murder and after the hopes pinned on the Egyptian Revolution of 1952 were dashed, the pro-Hashemite orientation quickly reasserted itself in Israel's foreign policy. The June 1967 war, in the course of which King Husayn lost the part of Palestine that his father had won in the 1948 war, marked not the final breakdown of this orientation but the beginning of a new phase. During this phase the ruling Labour Party remained firmly wedded to the 'Jordanian option', which signified preference for a peace settlement with Jordan based on a territorial compromise to a settlement with the Palestinians whose claim to a state of their own was now totally rejected by Israel. The special relationship began to unravel only in 1977, following the rise to power of the right-wing Likud with its insistence on keeping the West Bank as

an integral part of the Land of Israel and its claim that Jordan is Palestine.

In retrospect it emerges quite clearly that the early contacts between the amir of Transjordan and the Jewish Agency gave birth to a unique and fascinating bilateral relationship revolving around the problem of Palestine. This complex and many-sided relationship was punctuated by endless ups and downs, by crises and misunderstandings, by discord and disagreements. Yet it was founded on a solid bedrock of common interests, above all in containing Palestinian nationalism, and that was the secret of its resilience and durability.

Not everything that happened in Palestine in the aftermath of the First World War can be explained in terms of the special relationship between Abdullah and the Zionist movement. But it was an important factor in determining the fate of Palestine and in explaining why the Palestinian national movement suffered such a catastrophic defeat in 1948 while the Zionist movement succeeded in establishing an independent Jewish state over a substantial part of Palestine. Consequently, no account of the international politics of the Middle East, or of the first Arab–Israeli war, or of the emergence of the State of Israel, or of the origins and character of the Palestinian problem, can hope to be complete unless it gives the proper weight to the impact of the unusual relationship that forms the subject of this study.

Suggestions for Further Reading

In the original hardback edition of this book there is a comprehensive bibliography of all the archival sources and collections of official documents used, and all the works cited in English, Hebrew, and Arabic. This short list of suggestions for further reading is confined to books in English only. Even so the literature on Jewish–Arab relations and on the British mandate in Palestine is vast. In compiling this list preference was given to books that deal mainly with the late 1940s and, within this category, to books that are based on research in the British, American, and Israeli archives. A certain imbalance is therefore bound to occur because the Arab states do not open their archives for research or publish collections of official documents.

Of the older books on Palestine under the mandate, one of the most comprehensive and even-handed is J.C. Hurewitz, *The Struggle for Palestine* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1950). The classic work on the rise of Arab nationalism is George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1938), a work distinguished by its literary quality and the author's acquaintance with the Hashemite princes, other Arab leaders, and British officials. The Arab point of view is also presented in Walid Khalidi (ed.), *From Haven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem until 1948* (Beirut: Institute of Palestine Studies, 1971). Khalidi is a distinguished Palestinian historian and in his long introduction to this wide-ranging compilation of articles he puts forward the case of the Palestinians clearly and forcefully. For sympathetic accounts of Palestinian history see also David Gilmour, *Dispossessed: The Ordeal of the Palestinians* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1980); and Pamela Ann Smith, *Palestine and the Palestinians, 1876–1983* (London: Croom Helm, 1984). On the involvement of the Arab states in the Palestine question there is a useful and well-documented book: Barry Rubin, *The Arab States and the Palestine Conflict* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1981).

On Jordan the outstanding work, for the wide range of British and Arab sources it uses, for its breadth of coverage, and for the quality of its analysis, is Mary C. Wilson, *King Abdullah, Britain and the Making of Jordan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Of the older books, the following are worthy of mention: Hasan Hyder Abidi, *Jordan: A Political Study, 1948–1957* (London: Asia Publishing House,

1965); Ann Dearden, *Jordan* (London: Robert Hale, 1958); James Morris, *The Hashemite Kings* (London: Faber and Faber, 1959); and Benjamin Shwadran, *Jordan: A State of Tension* (New York: Council for Middle Eastern Affairs Press, 1959). Of considerable interest also, in view of Jordan's role in the Palestine conflict, are the reminiscences of three of the most influential men in Jordan—King Abdullah, the Commander of the Arab Legion, and the British Minister in Amman—in Philip R. Graves (ed.), *Memoirs of King Abdullah* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1950); King Abdullah of Jordan, *My Memoirs Completed: 'Al-Takmilah'* (London: Longman, 1978); Sir John Bagot Glubb, *A Soldier with the Arabs* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1957); and Sir Alec Kirkbride, *From the Wings: Amman Memoirs, 1947–1951* (London: Frank Cass, 1976).

On Zionism and the Arab question there is a never-ending flood of publications. For insights into Zionist thinking, the memoirs and biographies of the movement's principal figures are of obvious significance. A prominent example is Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1949). David Ben-Gurion has given his own impersonal record in *Israel: A Personal History* (Tel Aviv: Sabra Books, 1972). He has also been well served by two of his biographers: Michael Bar-Zohar, *Ben Gurion* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1978); and Shabtai Teveth, *Ben-Gurion: The Burning Ground, 1886–1948* (London: Robert Hale, 1987). Teveth has also written a shorter monograph on *Ben Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs: From Peace to War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). Of the numerous other first-hand accounts, the following were chosen for the light they throw on relations with Jordan: Moshe Dayan, *Story of My Life* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976); Golda Meir, *My Life* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975); Zeev Sharef, *Three Days* (London: W. H. Allen, 1962); and Walter Eytan, *The First Ten Years: A Diplomatic History of Israel* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1958).

Revisionist studies by Israeli scholars, published in recent years, have been reinterpreting many of the events surrounding the creation of the State of Israel. These studies draw heavily on the official records that are liberally declassified under Israel's thirty year rule. In general their authors tend to place greater blame on Israel for the Palestinian problem and for the political impasse that followed the first Arab–Israeli war. The list of revisionist books published in English to date consists of Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities* (New York: Pantheon, 1987); Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Prob-*

lem, 1947–1949 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Tom Segev, *1949: The First Israelis* (New York: Free Press, 1986); Ilan Pappé, *Britain and the Arab–Israeli Conflict, 1948–51* (London: Macmillan, 1988); and Avi Shlaim, *Collusion across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement, and the Partition of Palestine* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

The books on Britain and Palestine may be conveniently divided into those that were written before the official documents became available at the Public Record Office and those that were written after. Among the classics in the former category are Elizabeth Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East, 1914–1971* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961); John Marlowe, *The Seat of Pilate: An Account of the Palestine Mandate* (London: Cresset Press, 1959); and Christopher Sykes, *Cross Roads to Israel* (London: Collins, 1965). In the latter category highly recommended on the end of the mandate are the books by Mary Wilson and Ilan Pappé that have already been mentioned, Alan Bullock, *Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary, 1945–1951* (London: Heinemann, 1983); Michael J. Cohen, *Palestine and the Great Powers, 1945–1948* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982); Wm. Roger Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945–1951* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984); and Wm. Roger Louis and Robert W. Stookey (eds.), *The End of the Palestine Mandate* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1986).

On the 1948 Arab–Israeli war many books have been written, mostly on the military operations and mostly from a pro-Zionist perspective. Among the more informative ones are Jon and David Kimche, *Both Sides of the Hill: Britain and the Palestine War* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1960); Netanel Lorch, *The Edge of the Sword: Israel's War of Independence, 1947–1949* (New York: Putnam, 1961); and Dan Kurzman, *Genesis 1948: The First Arab–Israeli War* (London: Vallentine, Mitchell, 1972). But the most recent and most relevant to the theme of this book is Uri Bar-Joseph, *The Best of Enemies: Israel and Transjordan in the War of 1948* (London: Frank Cass, 1987).

Index

NB: Personal names beginning *al-*, *as-*, *el-* are entered under the name that follows, with prefix retained.

Abdallia 69, 425
abdication 30
Abdullah Ibn Husayn, King of Jordan
  ambitions for Greater Syria 32–8
  ancestry 18
  Arab League threat of expulsion 394–5
  arrival in Transjordan 27
  belief in Arab greatness 33
  campaign against 391, 417
  enthronement 66
  and Israel's right to independence 232
  last weeks and murder 415–21
  meetings with Golda Meir: first 92–100, 426; last 160–6, 427, 428, 429
  quality of pragmatism 406–7
  relations: with Sasson 98, 122, 142, 151–2, 239, affection between 424, reaction to assassination 419; with Zionists 79, 382, 407, 422, and special relationship 39–53, 276, 314, 421, 436
  renewal of contact with Israelis 207–13
  twelve-point plan (1938) 59–63
  see also Arab League; Arab Legion; armistice agreement; Jordan, Hashemite Kingdom of; negotiations; Rhodes armistice talks; Shuneh; Transjordan; Zionists
Abu Ageila 265
Abul Huda, Tawfig 144, 256, 260, 373, 421
  Abdullah and 126, 187, 336, 369, 389
  and armistice plan 265
  and arms embargo 349
  and British: Bevin 111–13, 127, 146, 148, 192, 243; Glubb 148, 192, 195; Kirkbride 109–10, 175, 189, 386
  and internationalization 380
  and Nuqrashi Pasha 199
  reputation 319
  and al-Said 419
  and Sasson 241, 251
  at Shuneh 304–7 *passim*, 329, 334
  and Transjordan delegation 284
  and treaty rumours 387
Acre 323, 366
Advisory Council 66
Afghanistan 363
Afuleh 156, 176, 184, 191, 240
agreement, *see* armistice agreement
Ahdut Haavodah 11
Ahduth (Unity) 13
Akzin, Benjamin 421
Al-Aksa Mosque 417
al-Alamein 65
Alami, Musa 15, 127, 244
Alexandria 218, 229
Alexandroni Brigade 191
Aley Conference (1947) 86–8, 108, 204
Al-Hadaf (newspaper) 85
Al-Hayat (newspaper) 67
Ali Ibn Husayn, Prince 18, 22
alienation 77, 399
Allenby Bridge 49, 69, 140, 175, 191
  Eytan's journey over 297, 300
  Sasson incident on 74
Allies 21, 26, 63–6, 181
Allon, General Yigal 227, 265, 286, 291

All-Palestine government 218–22, 234, 271, 391
Egyptian support for 230
Amman 123–30 *passim*, 202, 206, 258, 289
Abdullah's enthronement in 66
and Arab Legion's supply line to Suez 168
and Arab Rebellion 53
Ben-Gurion and 251
Bernadotte in 199
as centre for Arab military decisions 195
Dayan and Shiloah received in 396
despatch of war materials to 243
as focal point for Arab nationalists 34, 35
and foundation of the amirate of Transjordan 26, 28, 32
Golda Meir in 94, 166
Khalidi visit to 105
Kirkbride and 109–10
Kisch visit to 45, 46, 47
meetings in 144, 145, 192, 239–40, 295; Arab League 92, 95, 143, 187, 189; First Palestinian Congress 220
Ottomans use of 374
power struggle with Cairo 219
and Tel Aviv 223
UNSCOP sessions in 82, 83
Zubati and 161, 162
Anglo-Egyptian Treaty (1936) 265
Anglo-Sharifian alliance 41
Anglo-Transjordanian Treaty (1948) 111, 258, 348, 363, 365
and British military aid 226, 242, 266, 357
and West Bank 397
Ankara 362, 388, 406
annexation 222, 271, 329, 414, 432
Abdullah and 160, 358, 393, 397, 426; and enlargement of Transjordan 70, 121; as *fait accompli* 158; safeguard against 139; and UNSCOP 84, 91, 96, 105; West Bank 356, 357
armistice agreement and 313
Ben-Gurion on 263–4, 267, 269, 361, 420
Bernadotte's plan for 196–7
Bevin and 111
Egypt and 230, 231, 250, 321, 391; desire to prevent 172
Israeli attitude to 209, 249, 356, 360, 395
Jordan and 347, 348, 363
negotiation and 390–404
second Palestinian Congress and 257
West Bank 248, 269, 313, 378, 399; Israeli reluctance to extend recognition to 360
anti-Semitism, pathological 40
Antonius, George 15
Aqaba 238, 243, 266, 323, 355
IDF forces and 286, 288
Maan and: Abdullah's incorporation of 31, 32; Ibn Saud's claim to 75
see also Gulf of Aqaba
Ara 306
Arab Bureau 30
Arab Club 68
Arab Executive 6, 7, 46
Arab Higher Committee 72, 87, 88, 103, 105
and boycott of UNSCOP 81
formation of 7
and general strike 52
hostility to Zionism 91
and independence 77
opposition to 1939 White Paper 62
Palestinian Congress expression of no confidence in 257
rejection of partition resolution 134
Arab League 213, 214, 246, 385, 386
Abdullah and 95, 122, 127, 139, 394–6; claim to West Bank rejected by 432; conflict in 261–2; defiance of 135, 210–11, 279, 375, 396–7, 416; impositions of 244; relations

with 92, 107, 131, 234, 394–5; suspected support of 124; worthless decisions of 119
Aley conference 87
All-Palestine government 219
Ben-Gurion and 117, 119, 121, 228
Bernadotte's truce proposals and 193, 198, 199, 217
British policy and destruction of 113
campaign to expel Jordan from 391
conflict in 261–2, 264, 273
control of 128
crisis in 390–5
decisions and Jewish suspicions 138–47
and economic sanctions 77
Egypt and 229, 230, 237, 240, 262
formation of 90
invasion plans 173–5, 185, 188, 428, 429; and collusion with Jews 159–60
Military Committee 118, 143, 156, 182; plans 88–9, 91
mufti's political authority challenged by 108
and partition 89, 158
Political Committee 143, 189, 202–5 *passim*, 218, 350; and military issues 153, 154, 156; and UNSCOP 83, 86
al-Qawukji and 109, 129, 133
and re-creation of Arab Higher Committee 103
relations between member states 154
and UNSCOP 101
and White Paper (1939) 75
Arab Legion 113, 144, 239–53 *passim*, 286–95 *passim*, 303
Abdullah and 136–43 *passim*, 304, 306, 314; consolidation of rule 271; and petitions for protection of 112; prisoners of war 282; supposed withdrawal in Little Triangle 330; troops into Palestine 105
All-Palestine government and 220, 221
attack on Jerusalem 236, 237
Ben-Gurion and 117–18, 223, 225, 227
British association with 90, 145, 175, 345, 426–7; denunciation of officers 386; Glubb 147–51; influence 111, 117; protection of military installations 130
as deterrent to conspiracy 217
Gesher Kibbutz attack 146–7
and Haganah 97, 334
and IDF 403
invasion 178–90; plans 155, 161–71, 176, 191, 192; ten days' fighting 200–4, 206
maintaining 121, 195
repulsion of Wahabi invasion 31
Sasson and 119
see also Glubb, Gen. John
Arab Liberation Army 109, 172, 128–34, 184, 242
Arab National Club 67
Arab News Agency 141
Arab Rebellion 5, 52–3, 57, 109, 118
Britain and 8
Qawukji and 128
Arab Revolt 20–1, 30, 35, 333, 404
Abdullah as moving spirit behind 32
Faisal and 40–1
Lawrence and 22–3
Arab Section 12
Araba 284, 288
Arabia 18, 20, 24, 27, 46
Arara 306
Arat 356
Arazi, Tuvia 208
Arlozoroff, Dr Chaim 11, 47, 48, 49
Armenian Monastery 256–7
armistice agreement 317–43, 361, 382, 384, 433
Abdullah's popularity and influence after 347
Ben-Gurion and 267
Egypt's conditions for signing 248
implementation 409, 411, 412

armistice agreement (*cont.*):
Israel–Jordanian 311–16, 321, 395
negotiations 266, 269, 271, 273–316
plan 265
prelude to Israel–Transjordan talks 276–83
secret 261
Talal/Abul Huda observance of 421
see also Rhodes armistice talks; Shuneh
Arslan, Amin Shakib 15
assassination
of Abdullah 1, 418, 419, 420
of Arlozoroff 11
of Bernadotte 216
atrocities, Jewish 135, 161–2, 163
attack(s) 167–8, 193, 205, 345, 347
on Arab Legion 430; event of 237, 239, 243
diversionary 236
on Egypt 234, 240
on Jerusalem 182
Attlee, Clement 266
autonomy 18, 40, 164, 353, 424
Jewish 116, 142, 151, 167, 428; Abdullah's offers of 40, 42–3, 51, 123, 141; Qawukji and 129; UNSCOP and 86
Palestinian 221
Syrian 41
Axis powers 7, 9, 64, 128
Azzam Pasha, Abdul Rahman 86, 87, 172–4, 176, 240
and Abdullah 94–5, 139, 144, 202
and Bernadotte 213, 217

Ba'ath party 390
Bab-el-Wad 176, 203, 251
Baghdad 35, 37, 267, 289
Balfour, Arthur J. 3, 424
Balfour Declaration (1917) 6, 24, 29, 60, 90; Abdullah's support of 37, 42, and father's refusal to condone 40; as first major watershed in Arab–Israeli conflict 3; resistance to 5; White Paper (1939) and 9, 62
Baqa 378
Baqa el Gharbiya 310, 338, 339
Barzan Campaign 88
Basle 2
battles
for Jerusalem 178–87
for Triangle 190–4
bedouins 22, 125, 165, 270, 282
clashes with Jews 119
and honour 117
land-owning shaikhs 50, 51
Beersheba 127, 140, 167, 286, 323
Israeli control of 232, 258, 278, 306
Begin, Menachem 101, 319, 399
Beirut 82, 295, 303, 304, 355
and Ben-Gurion's strategy 194
PCC meeting in 297
Beisan 140, 156, 157, 213
Beit Jala 236, 237, 238, 254
Beit Jibrin 306, 369
Beit Safafa 328
Belgian consul 145, 181, 210
Ben-Gurion, David 12–15, 118–21, 147, 222–32 *passim*, 257
and Abdullah 283, 359–60, 370, 387, 409, 434
and American pressure 266
and Arab Legion 169, 170, 185, 206; plan for attacking 224; as prime enemy 194
and armistice agreements 338, 343, 433; with Egypt 286; with Lebanon 276
and Bernadotte plan 197, 199
and Britain 291, 421, 424; distrust of intentions 117, 311; hostility to 410 and cease-fire in Jerusalem 251, 256
and coalition government 274
and Dayan 325, 336, 340, 341, 371
and defence matters 90
and Deir Yassin massacre 136, 137
and Egypt 367
and future of Jerusalem 178, 253, 321–2
Golda Meir and 151, 162, 166, 167, 168

and Jewish Agency's reaction to Abdullah's plans 110
and Jewish enemies 64
and Jewish independence 43
military plans 142–51, 245, 246, 263–4
opposition: to Beit Jala plan 237; to Palestinian state 248, 354
and Palestine Arabs 338–9
Palmon and 131–2
and partition 55, 59, 198, 429
and plan for independent states 69, 425
Sasson and 124, 130, 161, 262, 281; and Abdullah's rising power 140; key to peace with Arabs 269; report from Paris 259; treatment of Arabs in Little Triangle 339; warning to Abdullah 141–2
and Shiloah's report on Arab League 391–2
and Stern Gang 399
and UN 193, 198, 375–6, 377
and West Bank 383; annexation 267, 269
Zaim's offer of meeting 316
Beni Sakhr 50
Bennt Jbail 184
Berlin 64, 85, 112
Berlin, Isaiah 54
Berman, Haim 130
Bernadotte, Count Folke 188, 189, 209, 222, 223
murder of 216
proposals for settlement 195–9, 213–16, 226, 227, 278–9; Farouk and 229
truce arrangements 193
viewed as Britain's poodle 207
Bethlehem 219, 235, 236, 238, 240
Abdullah's claim to territory adjoining 371
Ben-Gurion's intention to capture 224, 227, 228
cease-fire in 254, 257, 313
free access to 291, 324, 332, 336, 337
Bevin, Ernest 73, 177, 202, 242, 271
Abdullah and 83, 145, 176, 181, 426
Abul Huda and 112, 113, 126, 127, 146, 192, 243
and Anglo-Transjordanian Treaty 188
anti-Zionism of 77, 114
Ben-Gurion and 291, 311
and Bernadotte plan 216
foreign policy 110
meeting with Abul Huda 148
needless risks in Middle East 266
Bilby, Kenneth 252, 343
Biltmore resolution 66, 69
'Black Saturday' 72
Bludan meeting 77, 86, 87, 90
bolshevism 48
borders 341, 353, 356, 363, 410–11
of Abdullah's principality 32
armistice agreements and 342, 382
changing 320
concessions on 343
drawing of 112; in Gaza 219
expansion/extension of 169, 420, 421
infiltration of 401
key question of 352
limitation of forces in 323
and separation of families 324
tensions on 405
Transjordan–Palestine 258
vulnerability of 101
boycott 81, 385, 391
Britain 3, 4, 7, 21, 22
and Arab Rebellion 8
and surrender of mandate 78–9
see also British Empire; British government; mandate; withdrawal
British Empire 16, 63, 79, 106, 267
designs on Arabia 20
strategic needs of 250
succession of 106
British government 59, 115, 303, 350, 427
agreement with Bernadotte 213
and Aqaba incident 266
and Arab Legion 175, 187, 192
and armistice agreement 303

British government (*cont.*):
commitments undertaken by 24
and fighting in Jerusalem 179
financial support from 57
plot against Yishuv 127
Bunche, Dr Ralph 273–6 *passim*, 286, 312, 313
armistice talks at Rhodes 283, 285, 290, 312, 342
Burma Road 187, 251

Cairo conference 27, 29
see also Arab League; Egypt
caliphate 18, 21, 33
Carmel, Moshe 193
Carmeli Brigade 190
Casablanca 363
Catholic countries 375, 376
cease-fire 147, 187–90, 238, 266, 288
Iraqi army and 260, 306
in Jerusalem 181, 251, 252–9, 268, 271, 327; Jewish breach of 334
Security Council resolution for 204, 232
Chamber of Deputies 394, 396
Christian Power 20
Christians 126, 167, 178, 194
special rights for 66, 321
Churchill, Winston 27, 28, 29, 32, 37
Circassians 374, 388, 394
Coaker, Lt.-Col. Charles 145, 149, 300, 301, 305
coalition government 274, 319
Cohen, Aharon 11
collaboration 1–2, 85, 100, 193, 353, 423
Hashemite–Zionist 310
with Nazis 7–8
collective systems 48
collusion 154, 159–60, 243, 299
Colon 367
Colonial Office 56
Commons, House of 397
Communist Party 274, 360, 399
see also Palestinian Communist Party
communists 84, 230, 274, 281
see also collective systems
compensation 266, 346, 379, 382, 408
to landowners 412
for loss of Negev 188
to refugees 216, 396, 405, 411, 416
for surrendered territory
concessions 275, 322, 340, 346, 381
Arab expectations of 343
British 62
to business enterprises 424
Israeli 283, 360, 361, 364, 433; Abdullah and 382, 398, 416; al-Rifai and 408, 410, 413; unilateral 406; unwillingness to offer 351
Jordanian 378
opposition to 365
Constantinople 18
consul-generals 145, 210
Consular Truce Commission 181, 254
co-operation 123, 140, 415, 418, 419
Arab-Jewish 67, 246, 247; *see also* co-operation, Hashemite-Zionist
Britain–Palestine Arab 63
economic 47–8, 230, 424
Hashemite–Zionist 226, 249, 271–2, 355, 435; Abdullah and 358–9; Faisal and 40; powerful impetus to 373; setbacks to 51; subversion of 223
lack of 98, 193, 401, 409
MACs and 324
military 78
Sharifian–Zionist 41–2
with UNSCOP 82, 85
Zionist–British 64, 357
corridor(s) 214, 278, 361, 367–72 *passim*, 434
to Gaza 271, 416
to Jerusalem 199, 200
right to 384
Council of Ministers 66, 201, 242, 304, 413
Curzon, Lord 33, 114
Cyprus 210

Dajani, Omar 84–6, 91, 92, 123–4, 125–6
Damascus 22, 34, 109, 310–11, 333
  Arab League meeting in 153, 154
  Damascus plan 155, 157–60
  Faisal's kingdom in 25, 26, 27, 128
  Greater Syria plan 34
  headquarters of Arab resistance in 108, 144
  Sasson born in 67
Danin, Ezra 98, 99, 119, 120, 248
  and Abdullah 76, 83, 84, 91, 165
  and Golda Meir 93, 131, 162
Daskal, Avraham 93–4, 147, 161, 162, 166
Daskal, Hannah 93
Davar (newspaper) 11
Dayan, Maj.-Gen. Moshe 262, 337–40 *passim*, 400–1, 402, 403
  Beit Jala operation 236, 237
  and Ben-Gurion 325, 336, 341
  and Israeli armistice delegation 283–4, 290
  replaces Shaltiel as military commander 204, 223
  and Sasson 279, 280, 281–2, 293, 371
  Shiloah and 266–71
  as skilful politician 253–4
  and talks: Amman 396; Jerusalem 292, 321, 322; Rhodes 283–4, 290, 292; Shuneh 377–80; with Abdullah 279–82 *passim*, 293–4, 301, 302, 322, 329–30, 383, 387
  and UN 325–8
Dead Sea 32, 224, 228, 258, 323
  cease-fire line 313
  economic enterprises 284, 332, 356, 358, 365
  free movement for sailing vessels 284
  oil region south-west of 270
  territorial problems 361, 367, 369
Declaration of Independence 170
Decree of Unification 396
Degania 184
Deir Ayub 336
Deir Yassin massacre 135–7, 142
  Abdullah's reaction to 141, 161–2, 163, 239, 334
  demarcation lines 327, 328, 412
  armistice 308, 313, 318, 343, 349, 430; Dayan satisfied with 325; MAC and 324
demilitarization 275, 290, 323
Deraa 182
diplomacy 154, 218, 321, 432, 433
  coercive 288, 291, 430
  deadlock and military escalation 398–404
  economic incentives and 406
  end of 415
  of European Powers 31
  failure of 317
  and force 244–8
  Great Power 25
  inflexible 81
  inter-Arab 124
  international 198
  and military actions 11, 286, 314
  oriental 21, 208
  of Shiloah 267–8
  of Weizmann 41
  Zionist 12, 56, 69
Divon, Shmuel 208
Dome of the Rock 374
Druze, 74, 84

East Bank 43, 312, 336, 390, 405
  as economic bridge with West Bank 16
  Transjordanian delegation from 284–5
Eban, Abba 240, 241, 342, 343
Egypt 103, 111, 143, 176, 194
  Abdullah and 153, 217, 218, 391
  armistice: agreements 323, 361; negotiations 273, 275; on Jerusalem 331
  army and Damascus plan 155, 156, 158, 159
  blockade 225
  and cease-fire 187, 189
  frontiers 345, 346, 365
  and Gaza Strip 321, 329, 346, 364, 368, 372

Egypt (*cont.*):
hegemonial aspirations 172
key to Israel's acceptance/rejection in Arab world 232
opposition: to Greater Syria concept 36; to use of regular forces 138
and partition 70, 81
peace: 227–32; negotiations 355; settlement 351
pressed to invade Palestine 144
promise of intervention in Palestine 171–2
and Red Sea 367
second offensive against 259–66
settlement with 410
suggested expulsion from Sinai 421
Transjordan and 234, 430
and Treaty of Brotherhood and Alliance 78
Zionist breakthrough in 76
Egyptian Revolution (1952) 435
Eilat 258, 286, 291, 366, 403
agreement on shipping from 362
Ein Kerem 203
El Arish 265, 266, 291
El Auja 275
Elath, Eliahu 11
elections 393–4, 416
emancipation, Arab 20
embargo, arms 188, 349, 350
Ethridge, Mark 346
Even, Gen. Dan 191
exile 30, 205
exodus, Arab 136
expansionism 169, 249, 365, 420, 424
Israeli 134, 325, 326, 400; fear of 230, 317
Transjordanian 36, 71, 214, 222, 318
expeditionary force 138, 190
Extraordinary Zionist Conference (1942) 66
extremists, right-wing 210
Eytan, Dr Walter 230, 311, 340, 360
and Abdullah 292, 293
and Anglo–Transjordanian Treaty 370
Jordan talks 345, 346, 347, 349; and settlement 359
Shuneh meetings 296, 299–300, 305, 309, 322

Facts About the Palestinian Question (H. A. al-Husayni)
Faisal Ibn Husayn, King of Iraq 18, 20, 30, 67, 128
and Arab Revolt 22, 40–1
death 35
King of Iraq 29
and Paris peace conference 24–5
and Syria 24, 26, 27, 42, 68
and Weizmann 40–1, 82, 84
Faiz, Mithqal Pasha al- 50
Faluja 232, 265, 366
fanaticism, Zionist 216
Farbstein, Herschel 49
Farhan, Hamad 305, 309, 336
Farouk, King of Egypt 195, 228, 271, 317, 351
antipathy towards Abdullah 95, 234
and Arab League 138
and intervention in Palestine 171–2, 229
Fawzi, Mahmud 249
federation 69, 71, 73, 75, 219
Abdullah and 36, 65, 70, 76
Jewish Agency and 66
UNSCOP minority report on 86
Fertile Crescent 24, 27, 35, 50
First World War 3, 11, 13, 30, 436
end of 23
Fisher, Hamilton 415, 417
Fitzgerald, Sir William 378
Foreign Office 213, 215, 303–4, 349, 385
and Abdullah 56, 111, 113, 397
America's tendency to follow 245
and Saud-Husayn rivalry 30
France 24, 145, 164, 218, 402
Faisal and 25, 27, 42, 128
Jewish Agency and 130
mistrust of British policies 25, 27
Syria and 28, 34–5, 67, 128

From the Wings (A. S. Kirkbride) 359

Galilee 112, 188, 193–4, 205, 235
  annexation of 231
  banishment of Lebanese army from 242
  Bernadotte and 196, 214, 216, 223
  capture of 245, 278, 320
  Kirkbride and 110
  Peel Commission and 57, 86
  vulnerable borders 101
Galili, Israel 167, 168
Garreau plan 380
Gaza 279, 280–1, 323, 362, 371
  Abdullah and 127, 259, 271, 323, 367; against annexation of 250
  Arab Legion and 112, 140
  Ben-Gurion and 251, 367
  clashes between bedouins and Jews 119
  Gaza Strip 205, 228; corridor to 416; Egyptians in 275, 278, 368; future of 320–1, 329, 361, 372 and Israeli pressure on 265, 266; proposals for capture of 401
  Jordan and 363, 346, 364, 370, 381
  Palestinian National Council in 219, 220; government 221, 234, 235, 246; no confidence in 257; withdrawal of 244
General Assembly (UN) 197, 211, 214, 228, 239
  and Bernadotte plan 218
  and international regime in Jerusalem 369
  partition plan 100, 101, 103, 104, 105
General Zionist party 399
Geneva 84, 85
George V, King 297
German Colony 270
Gesher 146, 147, 191, 192, 368
Gharandal 286
Ghaur al-Kibd 48–52
Glubb, Gen. John 140, 146, 151, 295, 428
  and Abdullah 153, 154, 168, 173, 220; cease-fire in Jerusalem 253; invasion plans 386; military plans 126–7; Shuneh invitation 299; Talal's attitude to 418
  and Arab Legion 147–8, 178–9, 190, 191–2, 195; clash with Israelis at Gharandal 286; defence of Old City 180, 181–2; disarmament of Holy War army units 220–1; and Haganah 147, 148–9; improving security in Arab regions 137; influence 111; and Iraqis 289; strategy in Latrun 184, 185; ten days' fighting 200–3
  and Bernadotte proposal 199, 223
  and Israeli offensive 234–5, 236
  A Soldier with the Arabs 122, 150
Golan Heights 320
Golani Brigade 149, 190
Goldie, Col. Desmond 185, 235, 238, 428
  liaison with Haganah 149, 151
Goldmann, Dr Nahum 204
Government House (Jerusalem) 254, 256, 327, 338
Great Mosque 181, 417, 421
Great Powers 24, 36, 196, 213, 266
Greater Jordan 393, 396
Greater Syria
  Abdullah and 24, 63, 116, 311; ambition 32–8; and Arab unity 64; and Hashemite influence in Arab world 78; realizing 95, 138, 356, 424; Sasson on 65, 320–1; Sharett on 65, 333
  opposition to 36, 81, 89
  prevention of 269
  Syrian nationalists and 25
Greek Colony 378
guerillas 108, 128, 158, 172
Gulf of Aqaba 35, 313, 387
  Israeli advance to 288, 291, 314

Hadassah Hospital 179, 328
Hadera 278, 284
al-Hadi, Awni Abd 6, 15

Hadi, Ruhi Abdul 336
Hadith 367
Haganah 120, 131–4 *passim*, 143, 147–51 *passim*, 167
  and alleged plot by mufti 97
  clash between Arab Legion and 334
  and Deir Yassin 135–6
  military offensive 146
  reorganization proposal 90
  and threat of Hitler's forces in Palestine 65
Haidar, Amir Abdul Majid 209, 212, 239, 249–51, 351
Haifa 137, 140, 162, 193, 355
  Abdullah and 332; incidents at 141, 142
  access to 323, 361, 362, 363, 384
  Bernadotte proposal and 196
  fall of 139
  plan to capture 155, 156, 158, 159
Harkabi, Major Yehoshafat 293–4, 296, 302, 304, 329
Hashemite dynasty 19, 43, 74, 78, 357
  collaboration with 193
  Zionist relations with 1, 2, 16–17, 39–53, 68
  see also Abdullah Ibn Husayn, King of Jordan; Jordan, Hashemite Kingdom of; Transjordan
al-Hashimi, Lt.-Gen. Taha 182
Hatikvah (Jewish national anthem) 252
Hawari, Muhammad 352, 353, 391
'Hayogev' 406
Hebrew Republic 95, 100
Hebrew University 179, 270, 328, 421
Hebron 157, 313, 366, 369, 371
  Arab Legion and 139, 140
  Egyptians and 261
  Israelis and 224, 227, 228, 251; Abdullah and 239; Glubb and 235, 236, 238; and Arab Legion 240, 258
  as main objective of invasion force 127
  second Palestinian Congress and mayor of 257
  and security 306
hegemony 36, 65, 154, 172
Hehalutz (The Pioneer Movement) 13
Herut party 319, 399
Herzl, Theodor 2
Hijaz 18, 22, 29–36 *passim*, 47, 81
  and British Empire 20
Hill of Evil Counsel 327
Hilmi Pasha, Ahmad 181, 219
Hindawi, Major Radi 284
Hindustan 364
Histadrut (General Federation of Labour) 11, 13
Hitler, Adolf 6, 64, 65, 112
holocaust 59, 69, 319
Holy Places 321, 325, 375, 382, 431
  Muslim 417
Holy War Army (*Jaish al-Jihad al-Muqaddas*) 109, 220, 221, 223
Hotel des Roses 274, 289, 292
Hotel Trois Couronnes 345
Huleh 156
Husayn Ibn Ali, grand sharif of Mecca 20, 27, 30, 35, 45
  ancestry 18
  correspondence with McMahon 21, 24
Husayn Ibn Talal, King of Jordan 93–4, 435
al-Husayni, Abd al-Qadir 109, 132, 133
al-Husayni, Hajj Amin 8, 53, 108–9, 139, 219
  appointment and dismissal from Supreme Muslim Council 6, 7
  renewed Egyptian support for 391
  Facts About the Palestinian Question 87
  see also mufti of Jerusalem
al-Husayni, Jamal 6
al-Husaynis 105, 132, 133, 148, 211
  Abdullah and 51–2, 71, 124, 125, 374; rivalry 418
  forces 132, 133, 138
  insistence on sovereignty over Palestine 104
  and Nashashibis 6, 7

Husub 258
Hyde Park Hotel 358

Ibn Saud, Abdul Aziz, King of Saudi Arabia 29–30, 31, 50, 75, 195
  Abdullah and 26, 95, 195
  ambition of 31
  anti-Semitism of 40
IDF (Israel Defence Forces) 198, 223, 225, 259, 322
  Abdullah and 286, 288
  clash between Arab Legion and 403
  Dayan and 321, 339, 340
  and Operation Danny 200
  possible clash with Britain 291
al-Illah, Abd 184, 192, 203, 282
immigration, Jewish 47, 60, 76, 103, 362
  Abdullah and 48, 65, 70
  control on 9, 57, 61, 62, 64; Abdullah and 42, 52, 53; partition as 55
  Arab opposition to 4, 7
  armistice agreements and 342
  Ben-Gurion and 262, 320, 341, 433; and acceleration of 14
  from Europe 6, 55; dependence on 274
  mass 44, 263, 356
  Peel Commission and 54
  stepped up 8
independence 41, 142, 353, 354, 423
  Arab Higher Committee and 77, 81
  British recognition of 21, 22, 23, 24
  entitlement to 4
  Faisal and 25
  Jewish 43, 152, 427, 428; declaration of 168, 169, 170; loss of 376; right to 232
  Palestinian National Council and 219, 220
India 130
India Office 30
infiltration 400, 401, 410–11, 415
International Court of Justice 413, 414
international force 96, 97, 125
internationalization 198, 371, 373, 374, 376
  opposition to 365, 370, 371, 380
intervention 125, 229, 254, 265, 357
  Abdullah and 97, 111, 119–22 *passim*, 126, 144, 158; and Arab Legion 138, 139, 194 and al-Kilani rebellion 63
  Arab League and 128, 160
  Egyptian 171; Arab Legion and 237
  military 88, 316, 427, 428; British 31, 226, 242
  pressure for 107, 146
  resistance to 108
invasion
  Arab 174, 176, 177; Abdullah and 91, 117, 138, 172, 428; Arab League and 143; Arab Legion and 429; Ben-Gurion and 90, 124, 167, 169, 170; main objectives of 127; plans for 153–60, 192
  German, threat of 65
Iran 364
Iraq 21–30 *passim*, 35, 36, 109, 125
  Abdullah and 91, 97, 250, 364, 376; intervention in 63
  armistice line 284, 293, 313
  army 161, 184, 202, 241–2, 430; Abdullah and 280, 283, 265, 314; Arab League and 140, 173; and Arab Legion 290, 295; battle for Jerusalem 184; battle for Triangle 190–1, 193, 200, 224, 225; and cease-fire 260; Damascus plan and 155, 156, 157, 158; impeding of 147; in Samaria 278
  Bevin and 111
  Britain and 128, 165
  Hashemites in 188; *see also* Faisal Ibn Husayn
  Jordan and 418, 420
  as mediator 394
  opposition: to truce 205; to unitary state 189
  regent of 154, 239, 260, 262, 282;

Iraq, regent of (*cont.*):
and Egyptian participation in invasion 144
Transjordan and 80, 288–9; treaty between 78
Iraqi Petroleum Company 282
Irbid 211
Irgun 101, 135, 136
Islam 4, 21, 172, 358, 410
collectivist way of life contrary to 48
most sacred sites of 30
puritanical brand of 31
and unity 35, 364
Israel, State of
acceptance of 251
claim to whole of Mandatory Palestine 360
creation of 101
Draft Agreement with Jordan 383
establishment 1, 169, 208, 230, 267; prevention of 81
emergence 422, 423, 436
founder 12
proclaimed 10, 429
recognition 229
reliance on force 326
renewal of contact with Abdullah 207–13
superior armed forces 11
see also Abdullah Ibn Husayn, King of Jordan; Hashemite dynasty; Jerusalem; relations; Transjordan; war; Zionism; Zionists
Istanbul 13, 42
Istiqlal (Independence Party) 6, 15

Jabotinsky, Zeev 43, 421
al-Jabri, Ihsan 15
Jaffa 57, 139, 155, 278, 363
Jaffa Gate (Jerusalem) 180, 257
Jaish al-Jihad al-Muqaddas (Holy War Army) 109, 220, 221, 223
Jamali, Fadal 289
Jedda 22, 29
Jenin 133, 156, 366, 401
as main objective of invading force 127
and Triangle 157, 190, 224, 245, 314; Arab Liberation Army established in 129; capture of 191; Iraqi army in 184, 193
Jericho 139, 178, 224, 227, 300
and Jericho Congress 257–8, 260, 261, 264, 271
strategic positions near 295, 328, 374
Jerusalem
Arab Legion in 194, 227
battle for 178–87
Ben-Gurion and 13, 170, 245, 267, 296; obsession with 224
Bernadotte: murdered in 216; proposal for 196
cease-fire in 250, 251, 252–9, 268, 327; and armistice line 313
Deir Yassin victims paraded in 136
importance of 133, 373–4
internationalization of 101, 198, 365, 369, 371, 429
New City 184, 185
Operation Danny and 200
Palmach offensive and 168
Peel Commission and 57, 86
Special Committee and 325, 346
unique gate of 292, 296
united front on 373–80
UNSCOP and 86
violent struggle for 176
see also mufti of Jerusalem; negotiations; Old City (Jerusalem)
Jewish Agency 54, 81, 120, 131, 178
Abdullah and 1, 51–2, 71–2, 73, 89; acts of terror 70; and British 114, 115; and Dajani 123; and Danin 91, 98, 99; and Deir Yassin massacre 137, 142, 161–2; economic co-operation 424; emissaries 50, 67, 210, 250; and Greater Syria 311; militant public statements 171; secret agreement 141; special relationship 422, 436; and UNSCOP 83, 84; *see also* Zionism; Zionists

Ben-Gurion and 13, 15, 90, 136
establishment of 5
Executive 47, 49, 59, 69
and federation 66, 86
Kisch and 45, 47
and partition 76, 104, 425
Political Department 68, 85, 93, 130; Arab Section 12, 68, 74, 135
Shiloah and 267
Jewish Legion 13
Jewish Quarter 254, 279, 361, 369, 382
access to 270, 379
Jezreel 57, 157
Jordan, Hashemite Kingdom of 303, 308, 332, 334, 335
Abdullah: policy towards Jewish community 423; last weeks and murder 415–21
access to the sea 364, 365
and annexation 329
anti-peace faction in 434–5
Arab League and 390, 391, 394, 397
armistice agreement with Israel 312, 313, 314, 319, 321, 395; and demarcation lines 318, 325–6, 327; MAC and 323, 325, 338; restraint on hostilities 337
Ben-Gurion and 322, 354, 424
co-operation with Israel 355–89
dependence on British 67
diplomatic deadlock and military escalation 398–404
Greater Jordan 393, 396
and Lausanne Conference 342–51
officially named 66
peace settlement 435–6; prospects 397–8; Samir al-Rifai and 407–15
political system reform 336
prime minister of 154
see also Abdullah Ibn Husayn, King of Jordan; Transjordan
al-Juburi, Gen. Salih Saib 156, 157, 191–3 *passim*, 202, 203
and Transjordanian–Zionist plot 289
Judea 179, 278
desert of 258
hills/mountains of 155, 225, 239
plan for states of Abdallia and 69, 425
el-Jundi, Col. Ahmed Sidki 284, 285, 305, 307, 312
appointment to MAC 323

Kalkilya 185, 294, 295, 303, 336
future of 306
Kaplan, Eliezer 274
al-Karmi, Abdel Ghani 210, 250–1, 395, 398, 406, 411–17 *passim*
Kastel 133
Katamon 148, 168, 263, 270, 378
Kerak 26
Kfar Etzion 167, 169
Kfar Saba 185
Khaled Pasha, Hassan 46
Khalidi, Dr Hussein Fakhri 6, 105
Khalidi, Ismail Raghib 105
Khayri, Khulusi 336, 378
kibbutz, *see* Gesher; Mishmar-Haemek; Ramat Rachel; Tirat Zvi
al-Kilani, Rashid Ali 7, 63, 128
King David Hotel 270
Kirkbride, Sir Alec Seath 26, 33, 99, 109–11, 397
and Abdullah 137, 142, 303–4, 345, 380; Arab Legion attack on Jerusalem 182; deference towards 148
and Abul Huda 109, 113, 175
and Anglo–Transjordanian Treaty 242
and Arab Legion 202
and Azzam 173, 174
and Bevin 188–9
and Glubb 238
and non-aggression pact 385–6
From the Wings 359
Kisch, Col. Frederick 45, 46
Kitchener, Lord 20, 21
Knesset 274, 329, 335, 354, 375, 399
Koran 40, 46, 417
Kuneitra 194
Kurds 84

Labour Party 425, 435
Labour Zionists 43
Lake Success 93, 124
Lake Tiberias 157
land lease/sale 48–51, 54, 57, 61, 62
Laner, Lt.-Col. Dan 284
Lash, Brig. Norman 149
Latin America 375
Latrun 185, 236, 242, 263, 336, 361
  and Arab sovereignty 430
  armistice agreement and 335
  battles in 171, 184, 186, 193; and Arab Legion resistance 194, 203
  and cease-fire 254
  evacuation of 284, 327, 332
  Israelis: and free passage through 250, 251; plan to capture 200
  problem of 313
  pumping station at 223, 325, 327, 412
  and truce 205
Lausanne Conference 322, 332–3, 342, 344–53, 355
  Special Committee and 328, 337, 338
  strategy and tactics for 320, 334
Lawrence, T. E. 20, 22–3, 27, 28, 29
League of Nations 3, 4, 29, 37, 51
Lebanon 21, 81, 82, 89, 345
  Abdullah and 217
  acceptance of cease-fire 189
  Aley conference 204
  and annexation 231, 257
  Arab League and 86, 140
  Arabs exiled in 205
  armistice agreement 273, 323; negotiations 275, 276, 329, 331
  army 144, 156, 157, 242, 245
  division of 24
  and expeditionary force proposal 138
  failure to assist Egypt 265
  and Greater Syria 25, 34, 35, 64, 65; concession of special rights to Christians 66
  international force and 97
  and Lausanne Conference 350
  and non-aggression pact 264
  opposition to enlargement of Transjordan 80
  Palestinian National Council and 219
  prime minister of 143, 203
  Sasson and 68
Legislative Council 66
Levantine Arabs 153
Liberation armies 154
Liddell Hart, Sir Basil 185
Lie, Trygve 215
Lifshitz, Zalman 339
Lifta 270
Likud party 435
Little Triangle 313, 330, 340, 430, 431
London 71, 127, 209, 215, 239
  Abdullah and Novomeysky in 358
  Abul Huda and secret meeting in 111
  conference on future of Palestine 59, 61, 76, 87; Abdullah and 62, 75
  see also Britain; mandate
London School of Economics 11
Lydda 176, 203, 238, 363, 430
  Bernadotte proposal for 196
  concessions on 283, 408
  as objective of invading force 127, 200; captured 201, 204, 205, 278
  refugees from 206, 211, 251, 257

Maan 26, 31, 32, 75
al-Ma'ayita, Lt.-Col. Muhammad 284
MAC (Mixed Armistice Commission) 323, 344, 402, 403, 410
  and Israeli disputes 338–9
  overlap with Special Committee 325
McMahon, Sir Henry 21
  and Husayn correspondence 21, 23, 24
McNeil, Hector 204, 349, 340
al-Madadha, Falah 295, 297, 300, 394

Mafraq 149
Mahmud, Gen. Nur al-Din 154, 156, 157, 191
al-Majali, Rufayfan Pasha 51
Majami Bridge 192
Majdal 366, 381
Makleff, Gen. Mordechai 420
Malha 203
mandate
  British 3–10, 16, 26, 81, 87, Abdullah and 28, 32, 37, 64, 377, and Jewish Agency 99, and Transjordan independence 66, and Woodhead Commission 60; Ben-Gurion and 55, 425; Bernadotte and 196; Faisal's recognition of 27; Husayn's rejection of 29, 37; League of Nations and 3, 51; partition plans and 105, 113, 426; Peel Commission and 54, 56, 57; retreat from 76–9; Revisionist Zionists and 43; termination of 128, 138, 144, 148, 149, Abdullah and 168, 175, 427, Arab League and 153, Ben-Gurion and 161, Farouk and 171–2, Jerusalem truce and 179, and Jewish attack initiative 140, 167, UN and 101
  French 25, 34
Mandelbaum Gate 271, 292, 296
Mapai 13, 166, 249, 274, 319
  Political Committee 231
Mapam 249, 274, 360, 399
Mardam, Jamil 197, 202, 240
Marshall, George 216, 299
massacre 136, 137, 139, 239
Mecca 18, 20, 22, 30
  sharif of 21, 24
Medina 22, 26, 30
Mediterranean Sea
  access to 38, 80, 279; Abdullah and 38, 279, 323, 382, 434; Jordan and 363, 367, 369, 371
  lines of communication to 140, 156
Meir, Golda 85, 131, 281, 301, 360–1
  and Abdullah 114, 125, 146, 168, 177; first meeting 92–100, 116, 170, 426; last meeting 160–6, 170, 427, 428, 429
military issues
  action 263, 267, 278, 290, 341; preparations for 86; risks in 171; attack 205, 236, confrontation 118, defeat 138, 202, 258, 265, 344, escalation 398–404, force 151, 225, intervention 226, 242, 316, 427, 428, offensive 138, 146, 227, 427, operations 191, 262, 271, 278, 289–91, 332, Operation Danny 200, 203, Operation Horev 266, Operation Kedem 204, Operation Lot 258, Operation Nachshon 133, 135, Operation Pitchfork 179, Operation Shin-Tav-Shin 291, Operation Uvda (*Fait Accompli*) 283–96, 314, Operation Yoav 232, 237, 248, victories 132, 208, 433
  personnel: advisers 229, 239, 366, 371; chiefs 156, 199, 240; commanders 40, 109, 182, 295, 351; committee 88; experts 154, 170, 172, 224; forces 86–7, 324; governors 254, 259; negotiators 249
  plans 90–2, 126–7, 246, 252, 264; and calculations 142, 238;
  power 90, 221, 357; and capability 10, 198, 200, 430
Mishmar Haemek 133, 138
Moab, National Government of 26
Modiin 223
monarchist sentiment 35
Monroe, Elizabeth 16
morals, corruptors of 48
Morrison–Grady plan 69, 127, 141
Moscow 281
Mosque of Omar 374
Mount of Olives 182, 284, 325
Mount Scopus 322, 335, 409, 411, 413
  Dayan proposal to capture 341

Mount Scopus (*cont.*):
demand for territorial link with 361
free access to 284, 290, 369, 379, 383; Abdullah and 249; and normal functioning of institutions on 324; reciprocity and 332
Hebrew University of 179; and Hadassah Hospital 328
Israeli convoys to 251
Israeli enclave in 227, 241, 254
New City link with 378
sovereignty over 414, 415
UN protection on 337
al-Mufleh, Riad 284, 344
al-Mufti, Said 300, 394, 387, 397, 408
resignation of 403
as UN observer 211
mufti of Jerusalem 112, 132, 140, 148, 235
Abdullah and 83, 418, 426
and Aley conference 87
appointment to Supreme Muslim Council 6
and Arab League conference in Cairo 108
candidate for Palestine rule 221
decline of power 163
defiance of 100–6
Egyptian support for 229, 391
exile in Nazi Germany 63
followers of 219, 220, 390; former 257; at Lausanne Conference 352
as head of independent Palestine 90–1
Palestinian Arabs' despair of 246
plots and intrigues 97, 98
and shift of Arab policy 171
sway over Palestine Arabs 118
see also al-Husayni, Hajj Amin
el-Mulki, Fawzi 344, 345, 346–9, 394
as head of delegation at Lausanne Conference 322, 350, 351
and al-Rifai 377, 379
at Shuneh 305–9 *passim*, 383–5, 387
murder, *see* assassination
Muslims 20, 178, 181, 367, 374
Holy Places of 187, 321, 417

Nablus 178, 179, 191, 192, 379
demonstrations against Arab Legion in 201
as main objective of invading force 127
and Triangle 129, 157, 184, 190, 245, 314
Naharayim 140, 251, 367, 411, 413
Abdullah and 409; and Golda Meir at 114; and Rutenberg at 93, 94, 161; and Golda Meir 162, 166
arms caches at 147
economic enterprises at 44, 146, 313, 323, 332; reactivation of 356, 365
free access to 284, 370
Goldie–Shamir meeting at 149, 150, 151
inclusion in Israel 361
major flare-up at 402
partition plan secretly conceived in 105
Nashashibi, Ragheb 6
Nashashibis 6, 7, 56, 104
Nasir, Musa 336
Nasser, Sharif Husayn 190
Natanya 190
National Committee 180
National Defence Party 6, 56
nationalism 22, 36, 68, 150, 378
Arab 2, 3, 23, 26, 391; Abdullah and 18, 33, 50, 63; Husayn and 20
Jewish 2, 39, 68
Palestinian 42, 59, 374, 423, 436
pan-Arab 41
Syrian 25, 34, 42, 35
Nationality Law 51
Nayef Ibn Abdullah 418
Nazareth 156, 184, 240, 323, 366
Nazis 7–8, 61, 63, 319, 425
Negev 184, 188, 205, 245, 250
Abdullah 269–70, 361; and Bernadotte proposal for 198;

and contribution to Israeli victory in 272; and division of 268; emissaries to; bedouins of 125
armistice agreement and 275, 283
Ben-Gurion and 119, 193, 228, 262, 263; and Abdullah's conception of corridor through 372
Bernadotte proposal for 196, 198, 216, 222
as bone of contention 278
Britain's strategy for 218, 366
Egyptians and 223–36 *passim*, 244, 265
importance to Israel 363–4
Jordan desire for 367, 368
Operation Uvda (*Fait Accompli*) and 285–6, 288
partition proposal for 365
Peel Commission and 57, 86
UN partition plan and 101
negotiations 41, 239–71 *passim*, 319–89 *passim*, 432, 433
Abdullah 207, 239; and Sharett 11; and Sasson 65, 141; and Palestine Land Development Company 49
annexation and 390–404
official Israeli stand in 406
al-Rifai and Israel 409, 414, 415
Sharett and Egyptians 230, 231
Neumann, Emmanuel 49
neutrality, Egyptian 248
New York 66, 98, 100, 350, 370
Dajani and 86, 91, 124, 125
New York Herald Tribune 252, 343
New York Times 386
Nieuwenhuys, Jean 210, 211
no man's land 268, 292, 296, 323, 336
division of 327, 328, 371, 412
non-aggression pact 380–9
Norman, Col. Oskar 161
Novomeysky, Moshe 44, 358, 363
Nuqrashi Pasha, Mahmud 144, 199, 211, 214, 240
and acceptance of State of Israel 229
and guerilla warfare 108
Nur Shams 132
Nuseiba, Anwar 180
Nuwar, Capt. Ali Abu 284, 323

occupation 138, 240, 379, 394, 429
costs of 355
Old City (Jerusalem) 237, 263, 279, 380, 429
Abdullah and 257, 270, 374, 417, 431
administration of 210
electricity provision for 337
free access from 332, 383
Glubb and defence of 181, 182
Israeli plans to capture 148, 199, 203–4, 223, 290; and Arab Legion–Haganah clash 334
Jewish Quarter of 361, 369, 382
Operation Pitchfork and 179–80
Transjordanian defence of 205, 254
operations, military, *see* military issues
Organic Law 66
Oriental League 230, 231
Ottomans 20–4 *passim*, 36, 40, 42, 128, 374
Husayn invited to Constantinople by 18
Palestine under control of 2
Zionists and 3

Packard, Major-General C. D. 126
Pail, Meir 157
Pakistan 364, 397, 432
Palestine Arab Party 6
Palestine Electric Corporation 93, 110, 251, 323, 332, 365
Palestine Land Development Company 49
Palestine Potash Company 44, 258, 332, 358
Palestine Zionist Executive 45
Palestinian Arabs 70–7 *passim*, 80–7 *passim*, 103–14 *passim*, 120, 418
Abdullah and 38, 60, 62, 63, 171; as Arab League representative 218; aspirations 422; and Azzam 139; cowardly behaviour of 368;

Palestinian Arabs (*cont.*):
criticism from 337; and partition 425; as saviour of 212; and world war 411
All-Palestine government and 244
and Arab League 246
Ben-Gurion's oblivion to tragedy of 338–9
exodus of 136
Faisal and 41
fate of 354
Glubb and 153
and influx of Jews 52
Jordan and 347
military potential 158
mufti of Jerusalem and 118, 122
al-Qawukji and 129, 130
supply of rifles to 88
Palestinian Communist Party 104
Palestinian Congress 257
Palestinian Jews 40, 66
Palestinian National Council 219, 220
Palmach 168, 180, 237
Palmon, Yehoshua 131, 132, 133
pan-Arabism 1, 5, 80, 83, 121
activists 15
agreement 92
ideals 160, 175
interests 172
opposition to negotiations 435
Paris 24, 213, 215, 217, 249
Abdullah and talks in 209, 210, 211, 212, 269
see also Sasson, Elias (and Paris peace negotiations)
partition 15, 43, 55–60 *passim*, 69–76 *passim*, 423–31 *passim*
Abdullah and 158, 161, 172, 182, 239; and Golda Meir 92–100, 170
agreement to 335
armistice agreement and 305
Ben-Gurion and 353
collusion and 243
federation and 66, 71
Jerusalem and 365, 369, 378
mufti and Arab defiance of 100–34
Nuqrashi and 214
UNSCOP and 80–92
Zionist acceptance of principle 9
see also UN (United Nations)
PCC (Palestine Conciliation Commission) 297, 318, 320, 342–52 *passim*, 357
Abdullah and 396, 398, 415
and plan for internationalization 374–5
refusal to co-operate with 133
Peel Commission (1937) 9, 10, 54–8, 197, 424
British retreat from 61
Permanent Mandates Commission 51
Permanent Military Committee 88, 89
persecution, Hitlerite 8
Philby, St John 29
plans and strategies, post-war 66–76
plots 22, 36, 127
Poale Zion party 13
Poland 147
politics, war and 227–43
Pirie-Gordon, Christopher 205
Progressive Party 274
propaganda 7, 140, 141, 212
Abdullah and 64, 65, 137, 143, 386
Zionist 136, 261
Provisional State Council 167, 168, 208, 221, 231
provocations, Arab 120
psychological warfare 121
psychosis, war 174

al-Qawukji, Fawzi 125, 128–33, 148, 245
appointed by Arab League 109
military defeat 138, 242
unreliability 139
al-Quwatli, President Shukli 95, 129, 176, 184, 310

Radio Damascus 387
RAF (Royal Air Force) 31, 243, 266
Rafael, Gideon 240
Rafah 227, 249

Ramadan 210
Ramallah 139, 181, 191, 270, 328
  Ben-Gurion and 224, 245
  and cease-fire 254
  as main objective of invading force 127
  Operation Danny and 200, 203
  Transjordanian defence of 205
Ramallah Refugee Office 352
Ramat Rachel 270
Ramati, Shaul 284
Ramle 200–6 *passim*, 238, 283, 408, 430
  Israeli control of 278
  Jordan and 363
  refugees from 211, 251, 257
Ramle 132, 133
rapprochement 44, 131, 195, 388
Ras al-Naqb 286
Ras al-Naqura 275
rebellion 63, 247, 353
  see also Arab Rebellion Red Cross 180, 339
Red Sea 228, 258, 270, 283, 367
  access to 363
Reform Party 6
refugees 353, 372, 393, 400, 427
  compensation for 396, 416
  concessions on 343, 433
  expulsion of 339
  problem of 206, 246, 212, 213, 246; Abdullah and 333, 405; aggravating 291; impossibility of compensation and repatriation 416; and Israel's attitude to 209; al-Rifai and 363; solution to 323, 329, 346
  Ramle 211, 251, 257
  repatriation 211, 348, 352, 376, 416; Israel self-interest and 212, 433
  resettlement 210, 316
  right to return home 216
  ten days' fighting and 205, 206
reprisals 400, 401
resistance 144, 187, 261, 317, 387
  Arab 86; headquarters of 108
  of Deir Yassin inhabitants 136
Jewish 69, 218
  to partition 80
  to Zionism 5
Revisionist Zionists 43, 101, 420
revolt, *see* rebellion; Arab Rebellion; Arab Revolt
Rhodes armistice talks 271, 273–83, 301, 304–5, 311–18
  and Operation Uvda (*Fait Accompli*) 283–96
  Rhodes Agreement 307, 404, 409, 415
Riad, Kamal 229, 230, 232, 248
Ridder, Col. de 402
al-Rifai, Samir 92, 359, 407, 419
  Arab League meeting in Cairo 107, 109
  failure to form Cabinet 386, 387
  and Israel 408–15
  and new government 403
  at Shuneh 360, 362, 365–73 *passim*, 377–84 *passim*
rights 66, 105, 216, 341, 393
  Arab 25, 142, 153
  civil and religious 3, 40
Riley, Gen. William E. 402
rivalries 30, 232, 373, 376, 418
  Arab 222, 228, 352, 431
  Great Power 24, 36
Romema 270
Rommel, Field-Marshal Erwin 65
Rosenne, Shabtai 284
Rosh Ha'ayin 223
Royal Commission, *see* Peel Commission
Royal Diwan 137, 142
Rusk, Dean 240, 241
Russia, *see* Soviet Union
Rutenberg, Avraham 93, 94, 110, 301
Rutenberg, Pinchas 44, 93

Sabour, Gen. 192
Sadat, President Anwar 433
Safed 148, 156
Safwat, Gen. Ismail 88, 108, 144, 143, 154
al-Said, Nuri 282, 418
Salameh, Hassan 132, 133

Salt 49, 201
Samakh 184
Samaria 190, 225, 263, 278, 284
  defence of 179, 184
Samuel, Sir Herbert 27
San Remo conference 3, 25
sanctions 77, 188, 204, 396
Sasson, Elias 11, 99, 125, 130–1, 359–60
  and Abdullah 98, 122, 142, 151–2, 239; affection between 424; armistice agreement 286, 288, 290, 293, 301, 322, 362, 365, 368–72; failure of joint efforts 388; on Greater Syria 65; on partition 70–6 *passim*, 91, 425; peace talks 259–62, 264; preliminary talks 279–82; reaction to assassination 419
  Ankara appointment 388, 406
  Ben-Gurion and 124, 130, 161, 262, 281; and Abdullah's rising power 140; key to peace with Arabs 269; report from Paris 259; treatment of Arabs in Little Triangle 339; warning to Abdullah 141–2
  and cease-fire agreement 256
  Dajani and 123
  and Egyptian peace feelers 228, 248
  and Gaza Strip 320
  and Golda Meir 93, 162
  importance of 12, 67–8
  and Israel's consent to Rhodes agreement 409–10
  and Lausanne Conference 344, 345, 350, 351, 353
  and military reprisals 120
  and Paris peace negotiations 208–13 *passim*, 232, 246, 248–51 *passim*
  and partition 84
  al-Sati and 115, 118, 119, 135
  secret talks with Lebanese 275
  Sharett and 65, 241, 264
Sasson, Moshe 395, 407, 413, 414, 419–420
  and Abdullah 407, 417, 419
  appointed assistant to Shiloah 406
as-Sati, Dr Shawkat Aziz 114–15, 118–19, 135, 209, 411
  armistice agreement 279, 280, 411
  no man's land meeting 268
Saudi Arabia 81, 128, 189, 264, 265
  and Abdullah 56, 78, 95, 195
  and mufti's plot 122
  and partition 419
Sdom 258
sea, access to 32, 321, 372
  see also Dead Sea; Mediterranean Sea; Red Sea
Sea of Galilee 276, 316
Second World War 9, 66, 68, 131, 319
security 306, 319, 342, 354–7, 374, 434
  Abdullah and 318, 426
  diplomacy and 267–8
  mass immigration and 263
Security Council (UN) 80, 203, 258, 273, 399
  Abdullah and 126
  and cease-fire resolution 187, 188, 204, 232
  Dajani and 124
  Truce Commission 145
  and withdrawal of Negev forces 245
Sephardim 274
settlement, Jewish, *see* immigration, Jewish
Shaikh Jarrah 182, 203–4, 263, 256, 270
  Operation Pitchfork and 179
Shaltiel, Gen. David 167, 180, 204, 223
Shamir, Major-General Shlomo 149, 150, 151, 185
Shanqiti, Muhammad Amin 296, 367
Sharef, Zeev 131
Sharett, Moshe 91, 142, 221–2, 343, 354
  and Abdullah 52, 122, 164, 281, 368; on Greater Syria 65; non-aggression pact 383; renewal of

Israeli contact 208–13; tribute 389; trust 121
and Arlozoroff 47
armistice talks at Rhodes 285; and Operation Uvda (*Fait Accompli*) 286, 288, 291–2
Ben-Gurion and 117–19, 169, 245–6, 269, 271; and coalition government 274; and Dayan 325; and Jordan settlement 359, 410
imprisoned by British 72–3
and international loan for Jordan 125
and internationalization 370, 375
leading Yishuv diplomat 11
links with Arab world 232
in Paris 228–31
and partition 55, 93
and Elias Sasson 12, 65, 75, 122, 264; and appeal to Abdullah 350; and cable of talk with Abdullah 98–9; and Israeli–Jordanian negotiations 388–9; and Palestinian government-in-exile 353; recruited to Jewish Agency Arab Section 68
and Moshe Sasson 406
Shimoni and 247
and Shuneh 300–1, 309, 329–35
Sharifians 21, 22, 24, 41
and Britain's 'Sharifian policy' 27, 29
Shertok, Moshe 11, 208, 210, 252
see also Sharett, Moshe
Shiloah, Reuven 11, 127–8, 266–70, 402, 421
Abdullah and 321, 395, 396, 398, 406–17 *passim*; and Ben-Gurion 391–2; Shuneh meetings 359–72 *passim*, 377–8, 380–7 *passim*
armistice talks at Rhodes 283, 285, 305, 307, 309, 312
Shimoni, Yaacov 11, 116–17, 130–1, 134, 141, 393
as Middle East expert 85
Sasson and 115, 118–19, 208–9, 213, 246–7, 282–3
Shuneh 93–4, 259, 358, 408, 430
meetings 271, 279–82, 285, 296–311, 362–73, 383–4; and Dayan 293, 377, 380, 387; Sasson at 69, 70, 73–4, 76; Sharett at 300–1, 309, 329–35; Shiloah 359, 408; and surrender of territory 402, 430
Shureiki, Muhammad 394, 402
Sidqi, Ismail 69, 76, 425
Sinai 235, 238, 265, 421
Siraj, Hussein 297
Sofar 86
Sokolov, Nahum 283
Soldier with the Arabs, A (J. Glubb) 112, 150
sovereignty 360, 369, 412, 415, 430
Husayni insistence on 104
Jordanian 365, 367, 370, 371, 381, 382
Palestinian Arabs right to 81
Soviet Union 110, 200, 357, 399
Ben-Gurion and 263, 267
support from 121, 274
and unholy alliance 375, 376
Spiegel, Nahum 149
Special Committee 323–31, 335–41, 346
Stabler, Wells 217, 238, 299, 304, 345
statehood, commitment to 68–9
Stern Gang 135, 216, 399
Storrs, Ronald 21
Sublime Porte 21
subsidies, dependence on 67
subversion, economic 121
Suez Canal 168, 266, 355
al-Sulh, Riad 15, 143, 144, 203, 317
summit meeting 240
Supreme Muslim Council 6
surrender 317, 318, 402
Switzerland 419
Sykes-Pidcot agreement 24
Syria 20–32 *passim*, 111, 119, 128, 139
Abdullah: and hostile elements in 217; intrigue 125; planned takeover in 76; unification plan 310

Syria (*cont.*):
access to 80
and Arab Liberation Army 129
and armistice agreement 273, 314
army 156, 157, 159, 184, 191–2; Arab League and 140, 173; disguised as volunteers 144; withdrawal from Lebanese territory 276
and cease-fire 187, 189
elections in 72
and frontiers 345
growing communist influence in 84
hopes for independence 68
and Jericho Congress 257, 264
and mufti's plot 122
nationalism 25, 34, 35, 42
resettlement of refugees 316
supervision of borders 97
support in Europe for autonomy 41
see also Greater Syria

Taibiya 310
Taif 22
Talal Ibn Abdullah, King of Jordan 147, 166, 311, 421, 435
undergoing psychiatric treatment 418–19
Talbiya 378
al-Tall, Major Abdullah 146, 253–62 *passim*, 266–71, 327
and armistice talks 290–7 *passim*, 300–5 *passim*, 310–11, 329, 335–6; and Sasson 279, 280, 282
and Glubb 168, 223, 236, 386; denunciation of 150
al-Tall, Capt. Wasfi 154, 156
Talpiot 270
Tanach 300
Tel-Aviv 210–13 *passim*, 223, 241, 248, 262
consultations held in 320
Golda Meir and 162, 166
Jewish autonomy in 123
railway to Jerusalem 257
removal of government offices to Jerusalem 375
threat to 200
ten days' fighting' 199–206
tension 234, 317, 344, 367, 405
territory 338, 346–9 *passim*, 363–6 *passim*, 412, 432–5 *passim*
Abdullah and 26, 28, 333, 359, 424
adjustments of 297, 298, 416
agreement to surrender 380
Anglo–Transjordanian Treaty and 397
Ben-Gurion and 252
Britain and 22
claim to 21, 399; Abdullah and 371
concessions on 343
Dayan's philosophy of expansionism 326
gains 207
handing over of 304
settlements 195, 313
strategically vital 294
terrorism 9, 10, 86, 216, 404
crackdown on 70
Third Reich 63
see also Nazis
Tiberias 141, 142, 148, 156, 184
fall of 139
Tirat Zvi 129, 130, 132
Toukan, Jamal 384
Transjordan
Anglo–Transjordanian Treaty (1948) 111, 258, 348, 363, 365
arrival of Abdullah in 27
British mandate and independence 66
defence of Old City 205, 254
expansionism 36, 71, 214, 222, 318
foundation of amirate 26–32
Greater 352, 355, 426
independence 29, 66
and Israeli–Egyptian war 234–43
Lebanese opposition to enlargement of 80
merger with Palestine 80
talks: Israel–Transjordan 273–83, 301, 304–5, 311–18; prelude to 276–83; and second offensive against Egypt 259–66
union with Palestine 257–8, 393–8

see also Abdullah Ibn Husayn, King of Jordan; annexation; Jordan, Hashemite Kingdom of
Transjordan Legislative Council 51
treaties, *see* armistice agreement; annexation; negotiations
Treaty of Alliance (1946) 66
Treaty of Brotherhood and Alliance (1947) 78
Triangle 290, 291, 306, 314, 320
  battle for 190–4
  Ben-Gurion and 245–8, 262–3, 276
  concentration of Transjordanian forces in 157
  Iraqi forces in 261; attack on 200, 224, 225; Glubb and 184, 289; *see also* Little Triangle
truce 203, 204, 205, 313, 317
  Abdullah and 201, 239
  American proposal of 168
  Arab Legion and 252
  Bernadotte and 193, 195, 199
  contravention of 227
  in Jerusalem 181; broken 179
  violation of 223, 291, 292
  see also cease-fire
Truce Commission 145, 238
Truman, Harry S 217, 266, 303, 304
Trusteeship Council (UN) 377, 379
Tubas 295
Tulkarem 303, 306, 336, 401, 411
  diversionary attack on 191
  as main objective of invading force 127
  sparing of 294, 295
  and Triangle 129, 157, 184, 190, 245, 314; Arab Liberation Army established in 129
Turkey 11, 70, 130, 218
Turks, *see* Ottomans; Young Turks
Twentieth Zionist Congress 57
Tyre 194

Ulema (religious divines) 35
Umm al-Fahem 306, 310
Umm Rashrash 285
UN (United Nations)
  cease-fire order 225, 238, 266
  and Deir Yassin massacre 136
  and Israeli expansion 169
  observers 241, 254, 403
  Palestine problem referred to 77
  partition 10, 107, 278, 426; plan 108, 112, 353, 363, 428, Bernadotte and 215, 278–9, Britain and attempt to frustrate 113–14, and Jerusalem 170, rejection of 431, Sasson and 209, Sharett and 331; resolution 57, 146, 196, 246, 334, acceptance of 395, Ben-Gurion and 162, 198, Britain abstained on 111, charter of legitimacy for Jewish state 118, and establishment of republican–democratic states 130, rejection of 375
  supervision for Jerusalem 216
  territory allotted by 160–1, 168, 179; and towns 148
  Transjordan's admittance to 210
  truce 187, 193
  Zionists' defiance of 217
  see also General Assembly; PCC; Security Council; Trusteeship Council; UNSCOP: UNTSO
United Arab Kingdom 57, 60
United Religious Party 274
United States
  Abdullah and 92, 303; and agreement with Ben-Gurion 387; assistance from 65, 405
  Arab League and sanctions against 77
  Ben-Gurion's reluctance to antagonize 226
  Israeli demands and 299, 303
  Jewish lobby 100
  Shureiki appeal for military assistance from 402
  State Department 213–14, 238, 240, 304; and White House 218
  support: for partition 71; withdrawal of 133; for Syrian autonomy 41

unity 37, 81, 222, 396, 398
  Arab 24, 35, 36, 48, 172, 208, and disunity 240, 273; Abdullah and 376
  Islamic 364
Unity Party 50
UNSCOP (United Nations Special Committee on Palestine) 80–92
al-Unsi, Muhammad 50, 52, 64, 67, 68
UNTSO (United Nations Truce Supervisory Organization) 325, 327, 402

Vatican 375
Vevey 344, 345
violence 5, 86, 146, 401, 405
  escalation of 121, 401
  senseless 216
  threats of 387

Wadi Araba 32, 258, 278, 284, 286
  Abdullah and 305–6
  frontier dispute in 415
  Israelis and 290, 294, 403
Wadi Fukin 338
Wahabi movement 26, 30, 31
Wailing Wall 254, 361, 369
  free access to 284, 365, 379
war
  Arab drift to 171–7
  Arab–Israeli, first 1, 266, 271, 431
  Israeli–Egyptian 227–33; Transjordan and 234–43
  and politics 227–43
  War of Independence 274, 326
  see also armistice agreement; battles; invasion military issues; negotiations
Weizmann, Dr Chaim 11, 43, 44, 53, 281
  and Abdullah 42, 45, 281, 368
  agreement with Faisal 41, 82, 84
  and partition 55, 57, 59
  success of 3
West Bank 159, 224, 290–1, 383, 387
  Abdullah and 428, 431, 432, forces in 158, consolidation for takeover 194; agreement with Ben-Gurion 225–6; annexation 356, 357, 393; consolidating rule over 271; merger with Jordan 322; Peel Commission offer 57; population ratio to East Bank 405
  annexation 269, 313, 360, 378, 395, 399
  Ben-Gurion and future of 246, 247–8
  defence 379
  economic bridge with East Bank 16
  elections 390
  Likud and 435
  mandate and 160
  officially designated West Jordan 312
  Transjordanian delegation to Rhodes and 284
White Papers
  (1922) 43
  (1939) 9, 59, 62–3, 64
withdrawal 245, 324, 327, 332, 353
  All-Palestine government 244
  Arab Legion 203, 306, 330, 426
  British 112, 150, 188, 265; and Hashemite kingdom in Hijaz 30; impending 78, 86, 87
  Egyptian forces 242
  Iraqi forces 250, 261, 280, 295
  Syrian 276
  United States government 218
Woodhead Commission of Inquiry 59, 60
World Zionist Congress 2–3
  and World Zionist Organization 2, 66

Yadin, Gen. Yigael 227, 236–7, 262, 283, 366
  and Arab invasion 167, 168–9
  and Latrun 224; abortive offensive against 185–6
  and Shuneh delegation 296, 297, 299, 300–1, 302; and el-Mulki 306–7; and Sharett 309–10

Yarmouk 32
Yarmouk Battalion 129
Yarmouk River 251, 402
Yellin-More, Nathan 399
Yemen 20, 264, 265
Yishuv 5, 11–13 *passim*, 43, 90, 136
  chances of surviving Arab invasion 169, 170
  and information about Britain 127
  political isolation 130
  and role of settlements in defence plans 120
  and White Paper (1939) 62, 64
YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) 270
Young Muslim Men's Association 60
Young Turks 13, 18, 40
Younger, Kenneth 397

Zaim, Col. Husni 310, 311, 316, 317
  coup d'état of 333, 344
Zeid Ibn Husayn, Prince 18, 22, 78
Zion Gate 180
Zionism 68, 78, 81, 316, 358
  and the Arab question 10–15
  Arab resistance to 5
  criticism of Abdullah's attitude to 36
  hostility to 91, 317
  political 55, 64
  see also Zionists
Zionist Executive 13
Zionist Federation 11
Zionists 13–16 *passim*, 29, 87, 89–90, 204
  Abdullah and 65, 67, 69, 71–3, 134, 171; and Arab suspicions 162; denounced as lackey of 386; and Greater Syria 311; Iraqi clashes 282; relations 79, 382, 407, 422; and special relationship 314, 421, 436; *see also* Zionists (Hashemite connection); Shuneh meetings 76; and UN plan 426; and war 143
  ambitions 160
  basic conception of 293
  collusion with 150, 154, 299
  defiance of UN 217
  demands 60
  diplomacy 56
  encroachment 5
  fanaticism 216
  Hashemite connection 12, 39–53, 68, 105, 177, 226; collaboration 310; rivalry between 373
  hatred of 344
  immigration to Palestine 8
  and impulse to acquire more land 326
  Iraqis and 288–9
  lobbying in Geneva 85
  military offensive 427
  opposition to 7
  and partition 10
  policy 55, 128, 424
  propaganda 136
  struggle for statehood 425
  surrender to 318
al-Zubati, Muhammad 93, 94, 147, 160–6 *passim*, 396
  importance of winning over 213
Zurich 57

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 9999 01459 162 0

politicsofpartit00avis

politicsofpartit00avis

politicsofpartit00avis

Sale of this

This is the abridged paperback edition of the acclaimed *Collusion Across the Jordan*. From the reviews:

'. . . a thoroughly researched account of thirty years of contact between the Zionist leadership and Jordan's King Abdullah, contacts aimed at forestalling the creation of an independent Palestinian state and assisting Abdullah in taking control of the Arab parts of Palestine. It is a fascinating story of duplicity and cynical double dealing.' *The Washington Post*

'[A] splendid book, magisterial and provocative.'
The New Republic

'The best history of the Yishuv-Abdullah relationship.'
The Jerusalem Post

'splendid book . . . breaks up the familiar historical jigsaw and rearranges the pieces.' *The Economist*

'brilliantly presented . . . lucid and meticulous . . . reliable and illuminating.' *The New York Times*

'. . . . fascinating and sophisticated exercise in diplomatic reconstruction . . . [Shlaim's] sources include the full panoply of available Arab, British and Israeli materials, used often to brilliantly illuminating effect.' *The Times Literary Supplement*

'Access to recently opened archives . . . plus revealing interviews and the use of memoirs, enabled the author not only to fill in the gaps in the known story but also change it in significant respects . . . the book should certainly stand the test of time.'
Foreign Affairs

Avi Shlaim is the Alastair Buchan Reader in International Relations at the University of Oxford and a Professorial Fellow of St Antony's College.

Cover photographs: King Abdullah (Time Magazine) and David Ben-Gurion (The Hulton-Deutsch Collection).

Columbia University Press/New York

ISBN 0-231-07365-8